

LATVIJAS UNIVERSITĀTE

Valts Apinis

Promocijas darbs

“Zoroastrian influence upon Jewish Afterlife: Hell punishments in *Arda Viraz* and Medieval Visionary Midrashim”

(Zoroastrisma ietekme uz jūdaismu priekšstatos par pēcnāves dzīvi: elles sodu sistēma *Ardā Virāz* un viduslaiku vizionārajos midrāšos)

Teoloģijas un reliģiju zinātnes doktora zinātniskā grāda iegūšanai

Apakšnozare: Vispārīgā un salīdzināmā reliģijpētniecība

Promocijas darba vadītājs Dr. Theol. Ralfs Kokins

Rīga, 2010

Annotation

The main issue addressed in the present dissertation is whether Judaism (its Pseudepigraphic Medieval literary successors are implied) had borrowed certain concepts of Zoroastrian afterlife and how this can be exposed through the medium of available texts. There has been quite an extended discussion among scholars of various fields on this issue in general; yet there is a certain lack of a more detailed approach.

The following dissertation deals with the certain features of the description of hell („tours of hell” of visionary genre) within the context of otherworldly journeys of a God elected hero particularly concerned with the details of punishment of the sinners using principle of retaliation (talion) as means of reward. The task of the author is to carry out an analytical comparison between these common elements or its modified forms (hanging punishments, location of hell in northern regions, angels of punishment and various tormenting creatures, etc.) inherent at textual sources.

The main thesis of my doctoral research makes an attempt to research Jewish Medieval *tours of hell* as closely resembling concepts behind *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* („The Book of the Righteous Wirāz”, 9th-10th century, Zoroastrian community treatise on otherworldly journey to have a glimpse of heavenly bliss and punishments in hell) and other Pahlavi texts (up till the 9th century C.E.) of Sasanid period in Iran (226 C.E.-651 C.E.).

Zoroastrian descriptions of hell tours bear some particular elements which are exclusively vivid, especially in comparison to identical Jewish hell tours (Medieval visionary midrash) comprising the same or similar elements.

The concept of “hanging punishments” according to which the sinners are hung up by the part of the body they had sinned with is reviewed. The original idea of a principle of the correspondence of a punished limb to a crime committed is probably mostly borrowed from Zoroastrians; this statement could be approved by their book *Arda Wirāz Nāmag*.

Additional concepts of afterlife are found in corpuses of other Zoroastrian texts such as *Bundahišn* (“Creation”), *Dadestan-i Denig* (“Religious Judgments”), *Dēnkard* (“Acts of Faith”, “Acts of Religion”) and *Vendidād* (“Law against the Demons”).

Several Medieval Jewish midrashic texts are examined, including the tractate *Orot Hayyim* (“Lights of Life”), *Gedulat Moshe* (“The Revelation of Moses”), *Otzar Midrashim* (“Treasury of Midrashim”), tractate *Masekhet Gehinnom* (“Tractate of Hell”), *Masekhet Hibbut Ha-Kever* (“Tractate of the Pangs of the Grave”), *Gan Eden ve Gehinnom* (“Garden of Eden and Hell”) and the “Ascension of Moses” (Judeo-Persian version of Hebrew midrash included).

While exploring further sources of similar motives of transmission, the texts of Christian visionary literature as the Apocalypse of Paul (*Visio Sancti Pauli*) and the Apocalypse of Peter (Nag-Hammadi Gnostic texts), Medieval Old Slavonic apocryphon “Weeping of Our Lady” as well as Medieval Muslim *hadiths* (legends including *Miraj* or The Night Journey of Muhammad), Dante’s “Divine Comedy” (*Divina Commedia*) and other relevant material have been inspected.

Medieval Jewish visionary midrash which was popular among masses (however not supported by rabbis) can be considered as a descendant of earlier Jewish Pseudepigraphal and Apocryphal traditions. It received more elaborated form between the 9th and 14th centuries, and chronologically corresponds to fixing of *Arda Wirāz Nāmag* in a written form and most of Zoroastrian centuries old traditions written down during the 9th and 10th centuries (esp. 9th Cent.).

Table of contents

Annotation.....	2
Table of contents.....	4
Glossary.....	6
List of Abbreviations.....	10
Introduction.....	11
I. Task, thesis and method of the given investigation. General considerations on the topic.	15
1.1. <i>Describing afterlife</i>	15
1.2. <i>Visionary genre</i>	15
1.3. <i>Terminology and Imagery</i>	19
1.4. <i>„Demonstrative explanations” in Zoroastrian texts on afterlife and Arda Wirāz Nāmag</i>	21
1.5. <i>Hell punishments. Methodological issues.</i>	22
II. Outline and relevance of the present topical study.	27
III. Critical analysis of related major secondary studies.	32
1.1. <i>Brief history of modern research on Zoroastrian-Jewish interaction</i>	32
1.2. <i>Review of recent major secondary studies.</i>	35
IV. Zoroastrianism-Judaism interaction: general assumptions and conclusions for a detailed study.	53
1.1. <i>Babylonian and Zoroastrian-Jewish influences.</i>	53
1.2. <i>Judeo-Persian studies</i>	56
V. Writing Down of Traditions.	58
1.1. <i>Shift from Spoken to Written Tradition?</i>	58
Part I.	61
1. Survey of Jewish concepts of afterlife before and after the destruction of the Second Temple.	61
1.1. <i>Destruction of the Second Temple and its consequences</i>	61
1.2. <i>Transformations in Jewish thinking on afterlife.</i>	62
1.2.1. <i>Biblical concept of Sheol transformed.</i>	63
1.2.2. <i>Gehenna.</i>	64
1.3. <i>Rabbis and their opponents on afterlife.</i>	65
1.4. <i>Babylonian Jewish diaspora and the shaping of the afterlife.</i>	68
2. Early forms of post-biblical visionarism and Medieval tours of hell.	72
2.1. <i>Visionarism in Pseudepigraphic perspective</i>	72
2.2. <i>Tours of hell and some specifics of Medieval Jewish visionary midrashim</i>	74
3. Development of Eschatological systems within Jewish and Zoroastrian traditions.	77
A general survey.....	77
Major conclusions of <i>Part I</i>	81
Part II.	83
1. Jews and Zoroastrians in relation to “the other”. Evaluation of foreign relations.	83
1.1. <i>Rigidity of Zoroastrian Tradition. Contacts with non-Zoroastrians, the others.</i>	83
Part III.	91
1. Zoroastrianism and punishments in historical perspective and social context.	91
1.1. <i>Phenomenon of the „hanging punishments”.</i>	91
1.2. <i>Social history of the „hanging punishments”. Case of ancient Iran.</i>	91
2. Some distinctive features of visionary genre.	94
2.1. <i>„Demonstrative explanations” in Zoroastrian texts.</i>	94
2.2. <i>„Demonstrative explanations” in Arda Wiraz and Jewish visionary texts.</i>	95
Part IV. Contents of the visionary journeys.	98
1. Distinctive Zoroastrian elements in regard to hell punishments.	98
1.1. <i>Specifics of hell descriptions.</i>	98
1.2. <i>General Imagery of Hell.</i>	99
1.3. <i>Spatial and temporal measurements.</i>	102
1.4. <i>Chinvat bridge.</i>	104
1.5. <i>Details in hell punishments.</i>	108
1.5.1. <i>Hanging punishments.</i>	108
1.5.2. <i>The Fall of Satan motif and its relation to a fate of a sinner in hell.</i>	113
1.5.3. <i>Noxious creatures.</i>	121

1.5.4. <i>Direction:North</i>	126
1.5.5. <i>Cold fire?</i>	128
2. Distinctive Jewish elements in regard to hell punishments.	133
2.1. <i>General Imagery of Hell</i>	133
2.2. <i>Spatial and temporal measurements</i>	134
2.3. <i>Graduation of compartments in hell</i>	135
2.4. <i>Details in hell punishments</i>	139
2.4.1. <i>Hanging punishments. Is there a torturing mechanism?</i>	139
2.4.2. <i>Torturing creatures (angels)</i>	145
2.4.3. <i>North and cold revisited?</i>	146
Part V. Questions of „remote origin”. How to trace Zoroastrian origin to a non-Zoroastrian (Jewish, Christian, Muslim) source?	148
1. <i>Approaching the subject of influence</i>	148
1.1. <i>Arguments in favour of Zoroastrian origins in non-Zoroastrian sources</i>	151
1.2. <i>Concepts in favour of Zoroastrian origins</i>	154
1.3. <i>Arda Wirāz Nāmag and Medieval visionary midrashim on hell punishments</i>	155
1.3.1. <i>In regard to general hell imagery</i>	155
1.3.2. <i>In regard to distinctive elements in hell imagery</i>	156
1.3.3. <i>In regard to the nature of hell punishments</i>	157
1.3.4. <i>In regard to executors of hell punishments</i>	157
1.4. <i>Dating of textual sources. Zoroastrian and Medieval Jewish visionary texts</i>	159
1.4.1. <i>Spoken and written traditions</i>	159
1.4.2. <i>Writing down of traditions. Dating of sources. Shift from spoken to written tradition?</i> ...	161
1.4.3. <i>Dating and setting of AWN and Medieval visionary midrashim</i>	161
Part VI. Later Developments	166
1. <i>Arda Wirāz Nāmag, Islamic Miraj and other parallels</i>	166
1.1. <i>Description of torments of sinners according to Miraj</i>	169
1.2. <i>Other parallels</i>	171
1.2.1. <i>Medieval Old Slavonic apocryphon “Weeping of Our Lady”</i>	171
2. <i>Arda Wirāz Nāmag and Dante’s Alighieri Divina Commedia</i>	174
2.1. <i>Divina Commedia and various Medieval sources</i>	174
2.2. <i>Divina Commedia and the Iranian Divina Commedia</i>	181
Major conclusions from Part II-VI	184
Acknowledgements	188
Selected Bibliography	190

Glossary

Aggadah (Aramaic “tales”, “lore”): homiletic and non-legalistic exegetical Jewish texts;

Ahriman (Pahlavi, literally “Hostile/Destructive Spirit”; also *Ahremen* // Avestan *Angra Mainyu*): the hostile evil spirit or the Satan in Zoroastrianism;

Albūrz (also termed “in the direction of Arūm”, “Haraiti” or “Hara Berezaiti”): the mythical or cosmic mountain according to Zoroastrian texts (mountain range, perhaps the highest volcano *Damāvand* or *Demavend* in modern northern Iran) which surrounds the whole earth and where *the Chinvāt bridge* rests;

Amesha Spenta (Avestan, literally, “Beneficent Immortals”, also Amahraspand, Amashaspand, Amahraspand): the highest spiritual beings created by Ahura Mazda, sometimes referred to as “archangels”; their names are (in Pahlavi): Vohuman, Ardwhisht, Shahrewar, Spandarmad, Hordad, Amurdad;

Ardā Wirāz (Pahlavi, full title *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, „the Book of Righteous Wirāz”); a priest of the early *Sasanian* period, an author of a Pahlavi book which describes his visions of heaven and hell;

Arezūr (also the “Arezūr ridge”): the extreme northern ridge of the *Albūrz* mountain, a summit at the gate of hell;

Armilos (from Greek, “the destroyer of peoples”; Hebrew analog of Latin *Romulus*; various transcriptions available: *Armilus*, *Armaglus*, *Armalgus*, etc.): Jewish eschatological figure of the Satan or the Antichrist in late Jewish Midrashic texts; the earliest source using the name of A. dates from the 7th cent.; several scholars connect A. to Zoroastrian *Ahriman*;

Avesta (Persian; Pahlavi “abestag, abistag”); the holy scriptures of Zoroastrianism, the earliest Persian written document (second millennium B.C.E., written down approx. till the 5th cent. C.E.); the language of the *Avesta* (also Avestan);

Azirat bridge (Abrabic, also *al-Sirat*): a bridge in Muslim texts which will stand over hell on Judgment Day; should be considered in comparison to the *Chinvāt bridge*;

Bundahišn (literally “Creation”): Zoroastrian book of creations or cosmology, a 9th century Pahlavi text (also Greater B.);

Buraq (Arabic, *al-Burāq* “lightning”): mythological creature which brings Muhammad on *Miraj*

dakhma (Avestan): a tower-like structure where dead bodies are exposed, most often referred as the “tower of silence”;

Chinvāt bridge (*Chinwad*, *Chinvar*, Pahlavi *činvatō peretu*, lit. “bridge of separator”// Avestan *Chinavat*): a bridge in Zoroastrianism where souls of the dead cross and where are judged; further it leads to heaven and below it the hell is situated;

Dadestān i Dēnig (“Religious Judgments”, “Religious Decisions”): a 9th century Pahlavi text that contains answers given by Dastur Manushchihir i Goshnajaman of Pars and Kerman, Iran, to 92 queries put to him by his co-religionists;

Daēnā (Avestan, “that which is seen or observed”): a figure of personified Conscience; it appears as an ugly crack to a wicked person and as a beautiful virgin to a righteous person;

Daeva (Avestan, “daeva”): Zoroastrian demon;

Dahāk (Persian Zohak; Avestan “Azi-Dahāka”): a mythical Zoroastrian dragon chained inside Dāmawand volcano (mountain);

Denkārd (“Acts of Faith”, “Acts of Religion”): a 9th century encyclopedic compilation of the Zoroastrian religion (account of history, literature, religious doctrines, legend, customs, and traditions) containing extensive quotations of much earlier materials (thousands years older), including lost *Avestan* texts;

dev (Pahlavi; Avestan *daeva*): a demon;

dōžax (Pahlavi): Zoroastrian hell;

Dush-hukht: place of evil *words* (speech), the 2nd stage down to Zoroastrian hell;

Dush-humat: place of evil *thoughts*, the 1st stage down to Zoroastrian hell;

Dush-huvarsh: place of evil *deeds*, the 3rd stage down to Zoroastrian hell;

Frashegird (*Frasho-kereti*, lit. “making wonderful”): the eschatological time of the renovation of the universe in Zoroastrianism, marking the end of hell tortures, etc.;

Gehinnom (Hebrew “Valley of Hinnom”): Jewish hell;

Hadhōkht Nask (“a Book of Scriptures”): text of the *Avesta* dealing with events that follow death and funeral rites;

Hadith (Arabic, lit. “narrative”): (originally) Muslim oral traditions (later recorded in a written form) related to words and deeds of prophet Muhammad, being considered part of Muslim tradition, identical to Jewish *midrash* and Zoroastrian *zend*;

halakha (Hebrew, lit. “the path” or “the way of walking”): legalistic exegetical Jewish texts

Hammīstagān (plural of *Hamīstak*, “in balance, stationary”, also Pahlavi *Gyāg ī Hammestagān*, “place for the mixed ones”; Avestan *misvan gātu*): Zoroastrian purgatory, a neutral place

between heaven and hell where souls go if their good deeds are equal (evenly balanced) to their evil deeds;

Hekhalot (Hebrew “Palaces”): Jewish mystical literature depicting ascent to heaven;

Hijrah (Arabic): the migration of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers to the city of Medina in 622;

Jahannam (Arabic): Muslim hell (see *Gehinnom*);

Kabbalah (Hebrew, lit. “receiving”): discipline and school of thought of mystical Judaism;

khrafstars (also *khavstars*): noxious creatures in Zoroastrianism that serve as torturers at hell punishments; k. include various reptiles, scorpions, insects, etc.;

nasu (Avestan, Pahlavi “nasush”): dead matter, pollution; demon of putrefaction;

Merkabah (Hebrew “chariot”): movement in Jewish mysticism related to heavenly ascent

Magi – Zoroastrian priests;

midrash (Hebrew, “to investigate” or “study”): way of interpreting biblical stories, later referring to all non-legal discourse (incl. legends) in classical rabbinic literature (first preserved by oral transmission) as well as in post-rabbinic Medieval literature: since m. concerns our particular thesis it may be divided into visionary m. (aka Medieval Jewish visionary midrashim) and apocalyptic m.;

minim (Hebrew): sectarians, heretics in Judaism;

Miraj (Arabic, “the ladder”, later “ascent” and “ascension”): ascension of Muhammad, Muslim legends of Nocturnal Journey of the Prophet preserved in various texts of visionary genre and its modifications;

Ohrmazd (Pahlavi, Avestan *Ahura Mazda*): God, the supreme being in Zoroastrianism

Pahlavi: Middle Persian, used between 300 B.C. and 950 A.C, the language of many preserved Zoroastrian writings;

Rivayat: a collection of letters in Persian from Iranian priests in response to questions of their Indian counterparts on a variety of religious topics, written between 1478 and 1773 C.E.;

Sasanian (also *Sasanid*): the Zoroastrian dynasty which ruled Iran from 226 C.E.-651 C.E.;

Sheol (Hebrew): biblical underworld;

Srōsh (Pahlavi; Avestan *Sraosha*): a spiritual being who guards the soul (guardian angel) and protects it from evil forces for three days after death before it embarks on the *Chinvāt bridge*; concept of S. is similar to Jewish and Muslim angel Gabriel;

talion (Latin *lex talionis*, „an eye for an eye”): punishment of measure-for-measure, principle of judgment (retribution) execution according to justice, corresponding to transgression committed; also known as Roman legal term *lex talionis*; in respect of our thesis t. is referred to

punishment in the afterlife;

Vendidād (Persian; also *Vidēvdāt*, an abbreviated form of *vi-daevo-datem*, “Law against the Demons”): one of the books of the *Avesta*, date cannot be stated with certainty, but it may be suggested upon internal evidence that it was compiled, partly from older material, during the Parthian period; compilation of laws maintaining the purity of earth, fire and water;

Vīzarsh (Avestan *Vīzaresha*): a *dev*, who pulls the soul of the wicked to hell after his death;

Zand (also *Zend*): translation and exegesis, Zoroastrian commentary on an earlier text which is a part of religious tradition, equivalent of Jewish *midrash*.

List of Abbreviations

AIS Armenian and Iranian Studies (by James Russell)

APOT The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament (Charles, R.H.)

AWN *Arda Wirāz Nāmag* („The Book of Righteous Wiraz”)

BHM *Bet ha-Midrasch: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter*

Abhandlungen aus der jüdischen Literatur, edited by Dr. Adolph Jellinek.

TSSZ Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism (by Mary Boyce)

Introduction

„Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the revealed world-religions, and it has probably had more influence on mankind, directly and indirectly, than any other single faith.” - Mary Boyce

Past decade has shown a growth of an extensive interest in researching comprehensive Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Zoroastrian textual sources related to afterlife.

This study as well as my previous research on the topic of death and afterlife (especially in biblical and Jewish pseudepigraphal texts) is the result of a continuous interest in eschatological issues. The author doesn't necessarily pretend to be a professional Iranist, he studies texts as a theologian and a student of religion, searching for identical, common or modified elements or religious ideas within available multiple sources that provide explanations within a cultural-historical context as well as looking for possible ways of their interpretation, including series of arguments made by scholars working in a multidisciplinary field.

Such topical studies are interesting not only from a religious, but also from cross-cultural aspect - including social contexts (for example, attitudes through a medium of hell punishments expressed in *lex talionis* principle) as these reveal basic values of a specific society. Many appearing images may have a natural setting. For example, one of recent researches has been done on afterlife concepts in Islamic culture by young scholar Nerina Rustomji. She states that basic terms for heaven and hell were drawn from two daily realities such as garden and fire¹.

The case with Persian Iran (I do stress its Persian roots here!) is very interesting: it has kept its identity throughout centuries since ancient times as a civilization of Mesopotamia. Since the time it was the great Persian Empire (the Achaemenid Empire) spreading from the Mediterranean to the Indus River and encompassing three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe – from today's Iraq till the Caucasus region, including such

¹ For more, please refer to Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire. Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), Introduction, XVIII-XIX.

countries as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Jordan, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt. Since the invasion of Iran by Islam (7th cent.), there is an open question of who Iranians are: if they belong to Persians in Islamic civilization or to some other well integrated cultural-historical phenomenon. Questions were raised by historians whether it is possible to consider Zoroastrians as foreigners in the face of Muslims alongside with other religious minorities (Jews and Christians) of medieval Iran?² There were certain difficulties experienced at archaeological excavations since they were started on Iranian soil and currently are awaiting more data to be displayed. Its corresponding evidence could as well become enormously significant for my present study. Nowadays Iran has remained largely ignored subject of study. It is overshadowed by various political tensions and collisions; however its extensive cultural and religious background and historical relevance need not to be forgotten, especially in regard to biblical and post-rabbinical heritage. Furthermore, it is utterly important to assess the wider religio-cultural background for our purpose of denoting specific developments in perceiving the afterlife.

I am most delighted to deal with a topic used to be very popular at the end of the 19th century. Later, it lost an attention for more than a century and nowadays is awaiting the closer investigation. Therefore the books I have acquired for my dissertation are mostly out-of-print and rare editions of topical studies, thus being quite costly. The topic itself deserves a deeper investigation as it has indirectly affected and transformed Western European culture and its thinking, sometimes in most surprising ways. Nowadays, it is extremely necessary to be aware of enormously rich literary and folk heritage in its European context, studied by various scholars since the Bible was passed unto Europe.

From time to time, the world has been fascinated by various transformed Gnostic ideas, including Gnostic apocrypha and apocalypses, Manichaeism (as a separate research field) leading up to Medieval cathar heresies - in some cases, distorted distant ideas emanating originally from Zoroastrianism. Similar concepts have been transmitted throughout the world: from ancient Iran to Armenia, Byzantine Empire, India, Spain and finally infiltrating Europe as well. Silk Road has been known as famous crossroad for spreading culture Eastwards and Westwards. Meanwhile, Jews have also played a reasonable

² Aptin Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the Star and the Cross. Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran* (London-New York: I.B.TAURIS, 2006), 162.

role in the silk trade, linking China with the West: through Byzantium, throughout Arab trade to Europe, through Spain and Italy. Later on, hellenized Jews had become a part of an important trade network that connected Iranian Jewish communities with the eastern Mediterranean countries, while acting as “*cultural filters transforming and transmitting Iranian stories and concepts*”³. For example, Nestorianism, one of the major forms of Christianity in Iran (Iranian Church in Mesopotamia)⁴, although largely neglected by historical scholarship and deemed as heretic by Roman church, is to be considered as a transmitter of various apocryphal books (texts written in Syriac and Sogdian bearing distinctive Zoroastrian elements), as well came from Iran into Armenia as part of Sasanian rule, among there was a notable Christian visionary text known as the Apocalypse of Paul⁵. Further, this Apocalypse was passed onto Europe (probably until the 12th Century) at various translations which gave a certain rise to several other Medieval apocalyptic texts, reaching climax with Dante’s *Divine Comedy*⁶.

Let us remember the special interest about Zoroastrian prophet Zarathustra by Friedrich Nietzsche in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Also Sprach Zarathustra, 1883–1885)*. It became his best-known work, completed in Nietzsche’s elderly years; the masterpiece considered the most important⁷ by the author himself.

It is clear that later in the 20th Century the Nazis brutally misused the term “Aryans” (most interestingly, referring to non-Jews; in addition non-Aryans were defined as Jews automatically) instead of more neutral “Indo-Iranians”, meaning the exclusive followers of ancient traditions inhabiting parts of nowadays Iran, Afghanistan and India⁸.

³ Richard Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble. How Iran Shaped the World’s Religions* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 51.

⁴ According to Aptin Khanbaghi, Nestorianism (Nestorian Christians, also called Iranian Christians) is the only standard for the Church of Iran due to specific Zoroastrian environment - Aptin Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the Star and the Cross*, 11.

⁵ Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli: the History of the Apocalypse in Latin, Together With Nine Texts. Studies and Documents IV* (London: Christopher's, 1935), 4.

⁶ Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse: A Brief History*. Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 103.

⁷ Fridrihs Niče, *Ecce Homo. Kā cilvēks top tas, kas viņš ir. Kāpēc es rakstu tik labas grāmatas*, tulk. V.Gammeršmidts (Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC, 1998) , 69.-70.lpp.

⁸ Hannah Michael Gale Shapero, *Conversion to Zoroastrianism*. Published on-line: http://www.caais-soas.com/CAIS/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/conversion_to_zoroastrianism.htm

A topic of early influence of Babylonia on the Bible (to begin with Babylonian underworld descriptions) and later on Jewish tradition either remained a mystery for me as I continued to study it with my theology professors and read it at several scholarly articles. In the academic literature, there were only short statements about several Babylonian influences (especially, early ones), but there has been a lack of particular and direct proofs indeed. In other words, the material was considered not convincing far enough, yet grasping the subject vaguely.

After all, the above topic appears to be exclusive from the perspective of major secondary studies and exotic in regard to enormous scarcity of scholars specializing in this field.

The topical study was done by various scholars such as linguists, historians, cultural historians, religious historians, philosophers, theologians, Orientalists, Arabists, Iranists (working in the field of Iranian or Zoroastrian studies), dantologists (scholars to deal with Dante's works) and even heresiologists.

I should admit that while I was working on this thesis, the death of Israeli Prof. Amnon Netzer, one of the world's acclaimed scholars of Iran and Iranian Jewry, was announced on February 15, 2008.

Besides, the most prominent expert of Iranian culture and religion until now, a strong defender of Zoroastrian influence on Judaism, British Iranologist Mary Boyce (representing Western cornerstone of modern Iranian Studies) passed away earlier on April 4, 2006.

Zoroastrian traditional texts have been researched not only by Western scholars, but also by several Iranists. Such scholars as Jamsheed Kairshasp Choksy, Aptin Khanbaghi, Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla and Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, have become known to Western readers at least through their research written or translated into English.

To conclude this short introduction, I would like to express my sincere hope that this research can serve as a ground for a better understanding of commonalities in both Jewish and Zoroastrian religious traditions, including respective Muslim and Christian as well.

It should be noted that my research is irrelevant to current political tensions between Iran and Israel and is based upon purely scientific interest. Indeed it claims no ideological or racial superiority in favour of one or another nation or religion, but rather involves crosscultural study based on two traditions and their sacred and extracanonical texts.

I. Task, thesis and method of the given investigation. General considerations on the topic.

1.1. Describing afterlife

It is clear that in afterlife descriptions, similar or common features of expression are used in the texts of Near Eastern religious traditions (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Qumranites, Christianity, Islam). Similar concepts may also stand behind the imagery.

Descriptions of afterlife were first mentioned in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Subsequently, a certain resurgence and revision of these was declared during Medieval period, among which stands Dante's monumental *Divine Comedy* as well.

Which genre does a particular text belong to? What way or mode are the concepts of afterlife revealed at? What specific terminology is used in descriptions? Which special emphasis in descriptions is made in particular text? Which certain elements are distinguished as more important, i.e. modes of punishment? When and under what specific circumstances did a particular description emerge (if possible to detect)? These are the important issues in regard to methodology of textual study on afterlife.

1.2. Visionary genre

Texts of our particular interest belong to so-called visionary genre and are most often expressed in terms of an otherworldly journey. It consists of two literary types: 1) tours to heaven (ascent type literature)⁹ and 2) tours to hell. Visionary genre as a whole has been often characterised in secondary studies as a stimulating and steady phenomenon stretching from the ancient Near Eastern cuneiform texts up till late Medieval European folklore. The vivid literary activity and vitality of visionary genre (texts are exclusively descriptive) have been accompanied by no less greater artistic creativity through the spectacular aspect of visionary apocalyptic imagery that inspired both Oriental and European art. The description

⁹ Tours to heaven dominate the Judeo-Christian as well as pagan texts of Greco-Roman age. Martha Himmelfarb has written extensively on heavenly ascents, for more see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) and Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse*.

of heaven as a Temple of zikkurat, or otherwise royal palace/garden and hell as a reversed up-side down Temple (zikkurat) is particularly interesting especially in Muslim arts. The origins of the concept of heaven as a Temple (divine apartment)¹⁰ are found in ancient Near Eastern sacred texts. They later reappear in early visionary texts after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (70 CE), when the idea of earthly Temple is substituted or replaced by heavenly Temple and its city¹¹. This concept is characteristic of Pseudepigrapha - 2 Enoch and the Testament of Levi and, off course, in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament with extended heavenly liturgy¹². Each journey is conducted in terms of ascent-descent.

Texts of the visionary genre display the journey as a visionary revelation or a dream of a certain visionary figure-hero (Christopher Rowland refers to a term „the apocalyptic¹³ seer” or simply „the seer”¹⁴). Various complex speculations have been made since origins of a visionary genre. Up till now it is considered that it began particularly due to a widespread mantic or oracular wisdom of ancient Mesopotamia represented by certain class of wise and learned men¹⁵. Thus the roots of Jewish apocalyptic genre, popular in Graeco-Roman time, lead back to professional „wise men” of Babylon who specialised in cosmological (astronomy, meteorology, geography) and mantic wisdom, the art of interpreting dreams which established a succeeding Jewish genre in the Babylonian dispora drawing on rich local

¹⁰ Micrea Eliade explains this concept of „heavenly geometry” as the opposite of sacred to profane space, temple as a copy of heavenly archetype and Jerusalem as a perfect copy of heavenly prototype. See Mircea Eliade, *Sakrālais un profānais*. Žurnāla „Kentaurs” bibliotēka (Rīga: Minerva, 1996), 55-57.

¹¹ Valts Apinis, *Concepts of Death and Afterlife in Jewish Pseudepigraphic Literature*. Master’s Thesis (Rīga: Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia, 2003), 23, 34

¹² See, for example, 2 Baruch Chapter 21-26. Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse*, 76-78, 83-85.

¹³ It has been written on apocalyptic genre in Judaism and early Christianity extensively. Apocalypse is broadly defined as “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.” - John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre”, in *Semeia*, no. 14, ed. John J. Collins (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), 9.

¹⁴ Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven. A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: The Camelot Press Ltd, 1985), 52, 56.

¹⁵ Michael Stone, *Scriptures, Sects and Visions. A Profile of Judaism from Ezra to the Jewish Revolts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 46.; see also Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: an Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 59.

traditions¹⁶. Ancient Iranians believed that sages possessed the ability to visit the otherworld and return safely¹⁷. Urvan („soul”, journey of the soul following death) is an ancient and popular motif in Zoroastrian tradition.

Jewish apocalyptic in general is considered phenomenonic since emerges from a combination of both prophecy („prophetic oracles”) and the Wisdom traditions in the post-exilic times (during the intertestamental period)¹⁸. The material being possibly derived also from Greek, Hellenistic and various Eastern sources of prophecy, apocalyptic literature (produced by various eschatological groups like Qumran sect, etc.) was particularly opened to Iranian influence which continued during the Persian period¹⁹. Christopher Rowland and Mary Boyce support this position. Boyce deals particularly with pseudepigraphic *Sibylline Oracles* (Persian Sibyl) of Greco-Roman times to demonstrate extensive influences and transformations of former Zoroastrian thought. Clearly Jewish apocalyptic literature as a post-prophetic movement has many references to extended reflection over destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile in Babylon where it emerged under tough circumstances and which continued to play a very vital further especially centuries after the Exile²⁰. The fact which speaks in favour of the above is that there is no evidence of the eschatological beliefs and apocalyptic literary activity (the biblical apocalypses) in the centuries preceding the destruction of the Temple²¹.

Thus, phenomenon of apocalyptic visionary genre is considered as a new medium (deciphered by an angelic being) of prophetic activity carried out through interpretation²². The closer elaboration on this definition will be provided shortly afterwards.

It is common for all of visionaries to embark on an otherworldly journey in order to „return” finally to earth and reveal the hidden things. The message of the vision has to be

¹⁶ Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: the Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 165-166.

¹⁷ James R. Russell, „The Sage in Ancient Iranian Literature,” in *Armenian and Iranian Studies*. Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9, ed. James R. Russell (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 393.

¹⁸ Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 202, 208. Relation between wisdom and things apocalyptic have remained much discussed. See, for example, Lawrence M. Wills, Benjamin G. Wright, ed., *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 203, 209, 210, 212.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 215, 68.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

²² Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse*, 13.

passed unto next generations. According to scholarly study, the original spreading of these messages was performed through oral transmission. Later, due to unfavourable circumstances, these were put down into the written form. Zoroastrian *Ardā Wirāz Nāmāg* („The Book of the Righteous Wirāz” - henceforth AWN) serves as a good example for the above; and Boyce is convinced that Pseudepigrapha and particularly 2 Enoch were influenced by the circulating oral AWN²³.

Several elements in gnostic Apocalypses of Peter and Paul, popular among genres of apocalyptic lore at Nag Hammadi (Egypt), may lead to suggestions of an Iranian origin.

Other vivid visionary experiences are represented in Medieval Jewish modifications (variations) of *the Ascension of Moses* (*Gedulat Moshe*), the earliest dated by the first half of the 13th century, Muslim legends of Nocturnal Journey (*Miraj*), for instance, the *Book of the Ladder* (*the Book of Muhammad's Ladder / Le livre de'l eschiele Mahomet*, from the 8th century; the Old French translation from Arabic available from the 13th century) and *Miraj Nameh* from the 15th century (translation by poet Mir Haydar). *Miraj* is an Arabic term for texts of visionary genre originally meaning “the ladder”, but afterwards - “ascent” and “ascension”²⁴. A motif of ascension was very popular long time before the emergence of Islam. Also, Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (the beginning of the 14th century) uses the vision described as a journey in terms of time and space, which belongs to particular Medieval visionary genre (in Western Europe known as *visiones*). His literary accomplishment is widely accepted as a comprehensive summation and culmination of preceding inventions in the field of visionary genre²⁵.

Visionaries and travellers²⁶ become the mediators and describe geographical landscape of otherworld in detail: rivers, mountains, roads, valleys, bridges, and other features. In addition, the specific „life style” of the inhabitants of afterlife is described in terms of their rewards and punishments. The narrative character of these visions is

²³ Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*. Vol.3. Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule. Handbuch der Orientalistik. Erste Abteilung Der Nahe Und Der Mittlere (Leiden-New York-Kobenhavn-Koln: Brill Academic Publishers, 1991), 519.

²⁴ А.Б. Грибанов, „Заметки о жанре видений на Западе и Востоке”. *Восток-запад*. Исследования. Переводы. Публикации (Москва: «Наука», 1989), 66.

²⁵ Eileen Gardiner, ed., *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante* (New York: Italica Press, 1989), XXVI-XXVII

²⁶ Note the shift from earlier sacred figure of the seer (prophet or apostle) to profane figure in Medieval texts - whether a personage from simple folk or a popular contemporary of the readers.

accompanied by a unique and established vocabulary. Whether these visions are a product of a literary imagination or a record of visionary's real experience, these works attempt to describe realities hardly inexpressible in words. We can find few modified or expanded versions and different translations of the same vision which may explain the great popularity and importance of these works and the ways these were passed on into Medieval period, whether through oral or written form of transmission (some scholars allow a possibility of existence of both of these functioning in parallel). However, extended written literary activity in this respect is prioritised during the Medieval period (both Orient and Europe).

1.3. Terminology and Imagery

The preception of the visionary genre as prophetic interpretation has been noted already. In his recent research in the field visionary experience in early Judaism, Rowland suggests this to be an interplay of images and memorizing of Scripture: *“The exercise of imagination involves the visualization in the mind of objects, inspired by what is read in texts or in the external world. [...] It is a rather indirect relationship with the Scriptures in which the words become the catalyst for the exercise of imagination as text is taken up and infuses the imagination. Recalled texts yielded new meaning by a process of spontaneous interconnections through recall. Meditation was a regular period of deliberate thought, which may start from reading but which then opens up to a variety of subjects. The mixing of the verbal and the visual took place as, in the very process of recollection, what is retrieved is conceived of anew in meditative imagination”*²⁷.

Such meditative practice was probably based on books and more often was the result of a sophisticated process of memorization of scriptural texts, being a significant part of reading them. During this meditation process, the one was able to recall and envision. This exercise of imagination that involved mental visualization of objects, led ancient readers and

²⁷ Memorizing is considered a process to take place during the transition process spoken language to literacy. For more see Philip Huyse, “Late Sasanian Society between Orality and Literacy” in *Sasanian Era*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2008), 141. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/latvia/Doc?id=10267535&ppg=152>

hearers of texts to “visualize” what they read or heard to result finally in the creation of certain mental images²⁸.

In respect of specifics of language and imagery of visionary texts it should be admitted that Jewish tradition mostly uses biblical language and terminology (alongside with rabbinic Talmudic and Kabbalistic terminology), inherent to Judeo-Christian texts in general. Pseudepigraphal language in postbiblical period is a modified biblical language with apocalyptic emphasis. In exegetical perspective, Pseudepigrapha is defined as a material which “*consists largely in re-reading previous biblical literature according to apocalyptic models and ideas*” (John Collins)²⁹. In other words, textual material is restructured and reconceptualised according to postbiblical concerns (*Zeitgeist*). Similar can be said about Medieval Jewish visionary midrashim, since these texts were also written in accordance with concerns of the age. David Stern indicates that from literary point of view, „*interpretation...the genius of midrash is that it exists in a kind of gray area between these separate realms of imaginative literature on the one side, exegetical commentary on the other*”³⁰. Midrash as a narrative (Hebr. *aggadā*) has two functions: imaginative (literary phantasy, extension of traditional biblical stories) and interpretative (as a commentary to a biblical text). All in all, midrash is a contribution to a skillfull combination of narrative imagination and interpretation. Stern designates the former function as a „rabbinic fantasy” (speculation). It should be pointed out that Medieval visionary journey mentioned above is a representative of Jewish mystical narrative, largely produced by Jewish sectarians, not traditional rabbinic authorities. This literature consists of narratives and legends, accompanied by various messianic speculations that circulated among the masses. This genre is often referred to in secondary literature as belonging to Medieval Jewish apocalypics.

²⁸ This method has been finally fixed in late medieval period. More for this, please refer to Christopher Rowland, Patricia Gibbons and Vicente Dobroruka, “Visionary Experience in Ancient Judaism and Christianity” in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. De Conick (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 50-51.

²⁹ Julio Treballe Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible. An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Leiden-New York-Köln: Brill Academic Publishers, 1998), 446.

³⁰ David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky, ed., *Rabbinic Fantasies* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 8.

1.4. „Demonstrative explanations” in Zoroastrian texts on afterlife and Arda Wirāz Nāmāg

Many Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts from the 9th century onwards (*Bundahishn*, *Denkārd*, *Dadestan-I-Denig*, *Mainyo-I-Khard*, etc.), this appears a time when most of these were written down from oral tradition) often use concentrated form of expression formulated as questions-and-answers (i.e., *responsa*) to discuss various religious, legal and social issues. Daily issues of purity, for example, are solved by applying dialogical structure of narrative bonds between *Zarathushtra* and *Ahura Mazda*.

Indeed, this is especially true in terms of visions of hell: according to Princeton University scholar Martha Himmelfarb „take the form of guided tours” because the travelling visionary figure is used to question his guide for explanation of each displayed scene of the otherworld³¹. These are the designated „demonstrative explanations” („*These are those who...*”, „*These...*”): the technical term invented by Himmelfarb to analyse particular structure of „the tours of hell” (appearing as a structuring feature of apocalyptic tours) with its possible origin of Mesopotamian Babylonian literature (texts in cuneiform) known to Jews of Hellenistic period indirectly through a variety of other circulating texts³². This particular form of communication is present in various Judeo-Christian apocalyptic pseudepigraphal texts (for instance, 1 Enoch, and successors of these to be specified later), as well as Medieval Muslim tours of hell and Dante’s “Divine Comedy”. Latin visions (to be referred later) in this regard are not the exception. This element (usually appearing in a simple concentrated conclusion of a presented vision) in visions is normally designated as belonging to the instructive (didactic) part and follows an archaic threefold structure of exposition³³. Zoroastrian text AWN contains almost one hundred of questions and answers of the form “*What sin was committed...?*” “*This is the soul of the wicked who...*”³⁴. Although Himmelfarb does not elaborate more on Zoroastrian (AWN) and Muslim tours of hell, she inclines to think that „demonstrative explanations” are based upon earlier Judeo-Christian

³¹ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 45.

³² *Ibid.*, 68-69.

³³ Threefold structure of visions consists of 1) introductory part; 2) the vision (displaying places of damnation and places of bliss); 3) Didactic part. See Б.И.Яхро и исследование жанра видений. *Восток-запад. Исследования. Переводы. Публикации* (Москва: «Наука», 1989), 35, 38.

³⁴ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 47.

tradition pre-dating the rise of Islam³⁵. However, this position remains unsolved and is argued sufficiently. Richard Bauckham considers this to be a weakness of Himmelfarb's work as she ignored the fact that early Judaism lacked a developed concept of tours of hell in general in the 1st century C.E.³⁶. Instead, she points to Greek and Roman tours of hell (*nekyiai*) that contain an extended form of „demonstrative explanations” tradition and its specific modifications³⁷.

1.5. Hell punishments. Methodological issues.

The major concern of the present dissertation is particularly related to the *tours of hell* (terminology by Himmelfarb). These can contain elements of both individual and universal eschatology³⁸, however we would be exploring the former ones. *Tours of hell* (as a literary genre) usually include their respective components (similar elements and motifs): specific details in hell punishments, hanging punishments, *demonstrative explanations*, various torturing creatures. The study includes extensions of these features in religious texts of Zoroastrianism and Judaism (including sample texts from Islam and Christianity) to demonstrate eventual literary transmissions.

There are several issues to be raised in regard to methodology of studying texts related to hell punishments. What are the possible difficulties and advantages detected in such a study? What was the purpose of inventing such descriptions and what do we want to achieve out of comparing them?

Are there any differences in descriptions that run against our hypothesis? Which facts and arguments strengthen and, vice versa, weaken our hypothesis? Since we are making the comparative structural analysis of particular similar elements in both religious traditions, how the dependence or continuity connection of two traditions is to be established? Each of traditions had slightly different context and background. What is a particular structure

³⁵ Ibid., 48.

³⁶ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*. Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses. Supplements to Novum Testamentum. Vol. 93 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 51.

³⁷ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 49.

³⁸ For more on this see Shaul Shaked, *Eschatology in Zoroastrian Religion*. Article published online at http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/zoroastrian_eschatology.htm.

(architecture of hell) of Zoroastrian and Jewish-Pseudepigraphic afterlife (hell measured in time and space categories, locations, modes and creatures of punishment appearing, questions and answers posted)? Which specific details are dominating and extended?

The core argument of this thesis lies in the following tasks to be considered prior to more detailed text-based analysis:

1) clarification of inner transformations (defined as process of change and adaptation) within Jewish tradition itself (esp. after destruction of the Second Temple). I shall call these „developments within” Jewish tradition (for example, such Jewish afterlife concepts as *sheol*, *bor tahtiyot* („the lowest cistern”), *shahat*, *eretz tzalmavet*, etc. The above terminology is borrowed from biblical tradition and extended into viable midrash as a natural response to destruction of the Second Temple;

2) clarification of transformations (defined as process of change and adaptation) due to external contacts with other cultural and religious traditions (hellenism, Zoroastrianism). I shall refer to these as „developments (elements) from foreign sources” (in texts - foreign interpolations) inside Jewish tradition – evil angels or torturing angels (demons of destruction = a terrorizing creature), dualistic worldview, hanging punishments, crossing the bridge for judgement, *demonstrative explanations*. The above terminology is borrowed from non-biblical and non-Jewish environment and is yet extended into viable midrash. The issue of consideration is: do these represent respective replacements of previous biblical terms or are these to be considered as merely additions? Does a specific description avoid some elements of primary sources?

3) clarification of transmission of motives through oral and written traditions – examination of possible sources of borrowing. Is it the biblical language used in particular and biblical motives or is it an introduction of various new foreign terminology in descriptions? Can we speak of certain wandering motives (as folk narrative)? This is to be researched inside the specific selected visionary texts.

In order to clarify Zoroastrian influence on Judaism it is necessary to carry out a systematic study (comparison) of both Zoroastrian and Jewish³⁹ eschatological systems (to

³⁹ By determining „Judaism” and „Jewish” we are referring to Jewish midrashic (legendary) traditions and only in few cases (were specified) to halakhic discourses (for example, on purity issues).

clarify the issue, we talk about wast literature of post-rabbinic apocalyptists, not normative rabbinics!) while referring to separate texts of both traditions (4-10 Cent. CE and earlier sources). This should be processed with certain caution at stating broad context of both religious traditions. It should be noted that AWN as a core source of demonstration is primarily concerned with individual eschatology, while in Jewish apocalyptic literature the elements of collective (also termed as „universal”) eschatology are most often referred to.

The common feature of both groups of texts is that they belong to a visionary genre discussed earlier and describe an otherworldly journey of a God elected hero who travels accompanied by a divine guide.

Besides, we need to consider the whole textual tradition (both Zoroastrian and Pseudepigraphic apocalyptic in respect to *tours of hell*) to search for certain elements: both foreign („developments from foreign sources”) and domestic („developments within”) in order to clarify the possible direction of influence. It seems necessary to further specify and exemplify hypotheses and motifs based upon exact sources (i.e., torture by cold, etc.) that include other common patterns in texts of both Zoroastrian and Jewish traditions. If, for example, the location of hell in the north characteristic of Jewish pseudepigraphic? Are there any other notions and versions, and which specific texts reflect on this? Is the torturing or noxious creatures always present in punishment scenes, are there any variations, omissions or substitutions? What about *hanging punishments*: are they severe in character? Last but not least and if possible, what social structure can be reconstructed from behind these? Himmelfarb has pointed out earlier that „*any study of the tours of hell must be almost exclusively literary*”⁴⁰. A separate chapter is in detail dedicated to the dating of chosen texts.

All in all, the paradox of the following should be noted: Jewish midrashic visionary texts in regard to hell descriptions are witnessing several elements common to Zoroastrian Sasanian Zand (Zoroastrian midrash, so to speak), which in Zoroastrian tradition comply mostly with specific ritual purity notions. However, in late Jewish midrash the subject appears to be borrowed and transformed with mere legendary motifs, and thus has no specific religious-halakhic setting. For example, the idea of hell tortures with cold, not fire shall be mentioned. Measurements of underworld (time and space in hell) are given in various specific details

⁴⁰ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 5.

within texts. It is comparatively explored in the present study, aiming to find out what concepts lay behind certain metaphorical imagery.

The additional goal of the present dissertation is to provide a general overview of a discussion reflected in major secondary studies about Judaism-Zoroastrianism encounter. A separate chapter is dedicated to this issue. Few historical contexts [social history] are explored, too, to lead to the thesis argument.

Since there is a lack of deeper study on hell tortures (topic of major importance in the Middle Ages) in secondary studies in Zoroastrian-Jewish texts, this study awaits for closer examination of available textual evidence (partially in translations) including specific elements (components) appearing, re-appearing or omitted in the line of texts with a purpose to develop further hypotheses in comparative approach to religion. Manuscript based studies are considered as a progressive approach to derive interesting conclusions. It should be emphasized that very few scholars have been dealing with the issue in its perspective relating concepts within texts of Middle Ages/Jewish-Zoroastrian afterlife.

The current study may shed a light on development and transmission of some concepts related to afterlife in the East and West as well, including Christianity and Islam. Therefore it is impossible to study several concepts just in relation between Zoroastrianism and Judaism alone as we are addressing a period and location that once became a crossroad of many civilizations and indeed a birthplace of important religious traditions. The case of Zoroastrianism and Judaism interaction anticipates more or less equal knowledge of both religious traditions in order to examine one-sided or mutual influences.

In case of demonstrating Zoroastrian influence, the research requires a better knowledge of Zoroastrian sources and broader tradition to put the right arguments in task. Not only Zoroastrian AWP text is considered in detail, but other Zoroastrian texts on afterlife and eschatology, especially on hell (cf. *Bundahišn*, *Dadestan i Denig*) are concerned and involved for clarification of broader context of these concepts. All in all this means (and we will deliberately extend this position of ours in a system of several arguments later) that in order to clarify certain concepts on afterlife in late Medieval Jewish midrash and Zoroastrianism, we have to begin with biblical and intertestamental texts and should search up until the late 12th century concepts of Islamic afterworld, either. This is made in order to

proceed to our main thesis of Zoroastrian influence on shaping afterlife matters in Medieval Jewish midrash.

We have to admit that hell descriptions and tortures have been more popular than heavenly reward within the material of our concern. Richard Bauckham provides a suitable explanation of the case. „*Hell*,” he supposes, „...*tended increasingly to crowd paradise out of our tradition both because it was thought pedagogically more effective to warn people with pictures of punishment in hell than to attract them with pictures of reward in heaven, but also because hell was to some degree a theological problem which was felt to be such at the relatively popular level to which these apocalypses appealed.*”⁴¹

In her recently published book *The Apocalypse: A Brief History*, Martha Himmelfarb provides a reliable explanation for this matter: “*It is not hard to understand the reasons why hell was of more interest to both authors and audiences than paradise. From the author’s point of view, it was probably a reasonable assessment of human nature to conclude that fear of punishment is more effective in deterring sin than promise of reward is in promoting goodness. Authors may also have found greater scope for their imagination in refining old punishments and developing new ones than in improving on paradise, a place of such perfection as to be of necessity rather boring. And the obvious popularity of works focusing on hell alone suggests that medieval audiences shared the not very admirable but entirely human ability to take pleasure in the misfortunes of others. Hell turned out to be more entertaining than paradise.*”⁴²

⁴¹ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 94.

⁴² Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse*, 104.

II. Outline and relevance of the present topical study.

Irano-Judaica and Iranian studies recently have lead to interesting conclusions. It has been pointed out by several acclaimed scholars that the field of Irano-Jewish interaction has much greater significance than previously considered. It awaits a further detailed discussion (Martha Himmelfarb, Shaul Shaked, Alan Segal, John Reeves, Jacob Neusner, etc.). Few decades ago, famous Iranist Mary Boyce had affirmed the primary importance of direct and indirect Zoroastrian influence on mankind (including Judaism) apart from other religious traditions. According to Boyce, the knowledge of Zoroastrianism is necessary for every significant research on world religions⁴³. Although this view is nowadays supported and considered as maximalistic, it can lead to new specific conclusions in regard to our thesis.

Prof. Jamsheed Choksy writes on aspects concerning Zoroastrian-Muslim interaction in Medieval period, *“Although we may never be able to reconstruct precisely the multifaceted encounters between the Zoroastrians and Muslims in medieval Iranian society, we can learn how those two groups reacted to each other, arrived at accommodations, reconciled their hopes and beliefs with actual events, and overcame cultural obstacles in order to develop cross-communal bonds through which conflict yielded to cooperation, thereby fundamentally transforming Iranian society”*⁴⁴. As we will see later on, similar conclusions can be drawn upon the encounter of Judaism-Zoroastrianism. As emphasized earlier, in order to clarify certain aspects of this encounter, we will need to proceed in the provision of evaluation of both religious traditions, especially in a perspective of afterlife concepts. In this regard, we can not exclude Islamic concepts completely off the framework, because during the period (approximately through 7-14th centuries) many aspects in religious thinking were taking up common motives as a part of Near Eastern pattern. In order to track down developments in this line, there is a need to consider some certain turning points in history, i.e. Judaism prior to and after Babylonian exile; Zoroastrianism before and after

⁴³ Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 1.

⁴⁴ Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 5.

emergence of Islam, etc. It is clear that Judaism was enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism⁴⁵.

Prof. of theology Peter Asmussen (University of Copenhagen, Denmark) who researched Judeo-Persian and Manichean literature is convinced that Iran, the Arabian lands and Spain are “*elements in a chain of tradition dating back to the most ancient cultures of the Near East and being perhaps of greater importance to European literature that can still be detected*”⁴⁶.

There have been ongoing discussions about Pseudepigrapha of the Second Temple period and their relation and later developments into medieval visionary trend („developments within” Jewish tradition). Prof. Lawrence Schiffman has extensively considered the influence of Pseudepigrapha on further haggadic literature (Jewish legends and stories) to conclude: “*The late haggadic compositions (Medieval midrash texts – V.A.) were greatly...borrowing their material from the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, apocalyptic and mystic literature...in these we feel a spirit of Babylonian Jewishness. Edition of similar texts continued in Europe up to the end of 17th century*”⁴⁷.

Michael Stone is convinced that Medieval Jewish tradition should be examined more closely to distinguish between specific contributions within the material⁴⁸. Himmelfarb in her search for transmissions of *tours of hell* points to several important issues not yet solved at scholarly debates. She writes: „*A particularly puzzling problem of transmission presents itself in relation to the medieval Jewish tours of hell (distinction by me – V.A.), which contain early Jewish traditions ignored by or unknown to classical rabbinic literature. How did these traditions reach the Middle Ages?*”⁴⁹. This raises a statement that probably the picture of hell in the classical rabbinic sources did not affect medieval Hebrew *tours of hell*, and no specific mutual interaction occurred between these texts.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁶ Peter Asmussen, *Studies in Judeo-Persian Literature*. Studia Post-Biblica (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 42.

⁴⁷ Лоуренс Шиффман, *От текста к традиции. История иудаизма в эпоху Второго Храма и период Мишны и Талмуда*, перевод с англ. А.М.Сиверцева (Москва-Иерусалим: «Гешарим», 2000), 226.

⁴⁸ Michael Stone, *Scriptures, Sects and Visions*, 110-111.

⁴⁹ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 172.

Another interesting issue according to Himmelfarb is related to the transmission of pseudepigraphal *tours of hell* up till the Middle Ages. „...*Texts of the type on which the medieval Hebrew fragments of tours of hell seem to draw, apocalypses of the Second Temple period, in general have not survived in Hebrew; that is, they have not been transmitted by Jews. The importance of the question of who in the Jewish world had access to these ancient works or traditions and how they were preserved goes beyond the tours of hell, for the same questions need to be raised about other medieval Jewish works that show evidence of knowledge of traditions found otherwise only in Second Temple texts no longer extant in Hebrew.*”⁵⁰ One of the specific characteristics of later medieval *tours of hell*, whether Jewish or Christian, is that there are somewhat different concerns than the ones of former pseudepigraphal tours (for example, 2 Enoch surviving in various versions up till Slavonic manuscript in the 15th century). Himmelfarb continues: „*It would be quite circular to build up a picture of what constitute the concerns of medieval apocalypses based on a selected group of texts and then to determine that any apocalypse that failed to exhibit those concerns in earlier (or later). The broader the base on which the picture draws, the more useful it is*”⁵¹. She determines this as a succeeding topical study of her „*Tours of Hell*”. Although the above issues (Himmelfarb’s concluding notes) are more related to developments within Jewish *tours of hell* tradition itself („developments within”), they appear to be vitally important for further comparative investigation on these concepts.

Meanwhile, Shaul Shaked suggests an advice to trace back to Zoroastrian eschatologies and their specific structure reflected in Pahlavi texts to attain a clearer picture of Judeo-Christian tradition⁵². In terms of Zoroastrianism, the Pahlavi books were written down in their final reduction in the 9th and 10th centuries CE, in most cases after a significant period of oral transmission. Shaked argues that Zoroastrian influence particularly in the field of eschatological notions can be tracked even back to the Jewish writings of the Second Temple (Pseudepigrapha and apocrypha) before the rise of Christianity⁵³.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 172-173.

⁵¹ Martha Himmelfarb, op.cit., 173.

⁵² Shaul Shaked, *The Notions mēnōg and gētīg in the Pahlavi texts and their relation to eschatology*. Reprinted from *Acta Orientalia* XXXIII (1971), 83.

⁵³ Shaul Shaked, *Eschatology in Zoroastrian Religion*. Article published on-line at http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/zoroastrian_eschatology.htm

Theologian Richard Bauckham, Senior Scholar at Ridley Hall in Cambridge (Great Britain), considers the definite influence of AWN on Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition, including the Jewish pseudepigrapha and even more that of Zoroastrian apocalyptic tradition. He believes that the vision of Arda Wiraz is rather a legend (originally preserved in oral tradition) than a historical account indebted in its specific details (*hanging punishments*) and motifs to the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition, especially in terms of the concept of Greek Hades. In addition, he thinks that distinctive Zoroastrian features of otherworld have been added to the text⁵⁴ relatively later. Besides, Mary Boyce notices parallel motifs in 2 Book of Enoch and AWN and points out that this Zoroastrian text influenced 2 Enoch⁵⁵.

Dr. Mithra Ara (San Francisco State University), a specialist on world religions, including Zoroastrianism (her specific research interests include Indo-Iranian cultures, cosmology and eschatology in world religions), writes: “*Of all the nations of Asia, the Aryans (Indo-Iranians) have much to offer for a better understanding of the history of religions. Accordingly, we have before us a variety of subjects of study, which concern themselves not with history alone, but with language, religion, literature, and art as well. The Indo-Iranian religion has had a bearing on all the great known religious systems. Vedaism and Zoroastrianism have played essential roles in the formation and development of major doctrines in Hinduism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.*”⁵⁶

John Reeves, Prof. of Judaic studies at the University of North Carolina (USA), emphasizes the importance of apocalyptic texts produced and consumed by Jews, Christians, and Muslims during the second half of the first millennium of the Common Era: “*It is an important area of research that has been largely uncultivated by modern Western scholars, and hence a comparative study across the religious boundaries of the confessional corpora remains very much in its infancy. One of the more important tasks awaiting students of Near*

⁵⁴ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 18.

⁵⁵ Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, 431.

⁵⁶ Mitra Ara, *Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Traditions. The Genesis and Transformation of a Doctrine*. American University Studies. Series VII. Theology and Religion. Vol.275 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008), 225-26.

*Eastern apocalyptic involves the systematic identification, collation, and publication of the massive number of late antique and early medieval apocalyptic texts lurking in manuscript collections of libraries and research institutes around the world.”*⁵⁷

I would like to join the above line of thoughts and express hope that the following study of mine will help in encouraging more research of this amusing topic.

Considering the the suggestions, we need to proceed with the provision of more extended discourse on earlier and recent academic secondary studies on the topic.

⁵⁷ John C. Reeves, ed. *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic. A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 23-24.

III. Critical analysis of related major secondary studies.

1.1. Brief history of modern research on Zoroastrian-Jewish interaction

The topic of our study falls under multidisciplinary field of Jewish studies. It may be considered as well as a part of study of sectarian movements (heresiology). Lately, there were active debates dealing with Pseudepigrapha and Dead Sea scholarship: an attempt was made to find a common link between Medieval Jewish sectarians (namely, the Karaites) and the Dead Sea manuscripts. It was proposed that another theme worthy of deeper exploration would be between Karaism (Karaites Judaism) and postrabbinic Jewish apocalypses of Islamicate Jewry (Late Antiquity / the early Middle Ages)⁵⁸. Attempts to find commonalities between later Pseudepigrapha traditions and Kabbalistic circles, namely, *Hekhalot* mystical literature (A.Jellinek, M.Himmelfarb, M.Idel) have appeared too, although their continued contributions can be considered only as „*the tip of a very large iceberg*”⁵⁹. And finally, common Zoroastrian and Quranic motifs have been pointed out (C.Tysdall, etc.). One of the recent authors has named a tendency of searching of common topics and images in Oriental literatures as „*parallelomania*”, meaning the explanation of circular interaction between two or more texts from different ages (he uses an example of Dead Sea Scrolls and Karaism phenomenon to demonstrate this)⁶⁰.

I would like to consider a prehistory of scholarship on Zoroastrian-Jewish interaction prior to delving into further in-depth study on our topic. It is clear that the first researches in the field nowadays proudly titled Irano-Judaica grew out of the fascination of Westerners in the Oriental cultures and languages. As we shall see, the primary interest was particularly related to the study of Gnosticism and the *Kabbala* (G.Herder, A.Jellinek, etc.), especially in the 19th century.

Later, exotic subdisciplines, such as Irano-Indian studies, Armeno-Iranica and Graeco-Judaica (e.g., Hellenistic Jewish works such as Philo and Josephus) emerged as

⁵⁸ Ibid., Preface, VIII

⁵⁹ John C. Reeves, ed. *Trajectories*, op.cit., VIII.

⁶⁰ Fred Astren, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Medieval Jewish Studies: Methods and Problems,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8, 2 (2001), 122.

consequences of scholarly investigation on various historical, cultural, religious and philosophical traces left by widespread influence of Persian Sasanid (Sasanian) Empire both westwards and eastwards as a part of Iranising trend. This trend, although generally ignored in the past, is nowadays studied by very few experts in the field.

It is obvious that the early interest about Zoroastrianism has begun at the early times (the turn of 17th and 18th centuries): when various travellers visited Persia and India at the time when scholarly activities (descriptive in its character) were mainly based upon ethnographic observations of local practices (incl. baptism, marriage, burial) among the Parsis⁶¹. The “*interest in all things Zoroastrian*” began when the first religious documents were published in the West – the 19th and early 20th century⁶². Until the beginning of the 18th century, Tomas Hyde, a British Orientalist, the librarian and keeper of the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford became the the most visible amongst the first pure scholars (not merely observers). He was a polyglot of Eastern languages such as Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Syriac, Latin, and even Chinese. Most of Hyde’s works and translations were written in Latin. His *Historia religionis veterum Persarum eorumque Magorum* (published in 1700) is a real masterpiece among his works on a broad scope of topics, One of his theses (to remain hypothetical) was an affirmation of deep Jewish influences upon Zoroastrianism, nowadays demonstrating the opposite direction of influence. According to Stroumsa, Hyde has to be considered as one of the first scholars who initiated the “Irano-Judaica” research field, nowadays usually associated with Israeli Prof. Shaul Shaked⁶³.

Generally speaking, the 19th century appears to be the Golden age of scholarship of relationships between Judaism and Gnosticism, as well as Judaism and Zoroastrianism.

According to Israeli scholar Gedaliahu Stroumsa (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel), it is possible to consider the beginning of fascination and modern research on Zoroastrianism by westerners since *Zend Avesta* (3 vols.) was first published. The release contains collections from the sacred writings of the Zoroastrians, a life of Zaratushtra, and fragments of works ascribed to Zoroaster, by French orientalist Abraham Hyacinthe

⁶¹ Guy G. Stroumsa, “Thomas Hyde and the Birth of Zoroastrian Studies,” in offprint from *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 26 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Faculty of Humanities, 2002), 226.

⁶² Alan Segal, *Life After Death. A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland: Doubleday, 2004), 175.

⁶³ Guy G. Stroumsa, “Thomas Hyde”, 230.

Anquetil-Duperron (1731 - 1805) in 1771⁶⁴. This work is concentrated mostly on philological study of ancient Iranian texts. Duperron learned ancient Persian from Parsi priests in India. He translated portions of Zoroastrian *Vendidad* and some other texts, indeed his major work *Zend Avesta* contains a collection of materials acquired during his eastern travels, including classical Zoroastrian texts. Arthur Schopenhauer, the famous German philosopher of later times was inspired by reading Duperron's translations.

In the 19th century, Gnostic, Kabbalistic and Jewish/Christian sectarian texts (including pseudepigraphal texts) were studied widely by German Protestant theologians. Later on, Baruch Spinoza and Johann Gottfried von Herder continued the research on related issues, too. One may wonder that Herder's *Oldest Document of the Human Race (Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts, 1774-76)* appeared in Riga; in philosophical terms mostly, it stated that Jews came into close contact and were largely influenced by "*Chaldean philosophy*" as a part of *Älteste Urkunde* or "*the oldest document*" of the Exile⁶⁵. Zoroastrian Sasanian text *Bundahišn* (referred as *Bundehesch*) became accessible. Shortly before, it was described by Herder as following: "*Creation commentary of Kabbalistic concept, but what a difference!*" ("*Kommentar der Schöpfung nach den Begriffen des Kabbala: aber welch ein Unterschied!*")⁶⁶.

In the 19th century, European scholars from Germany, France and England were involved in a deeper study of Gnostic-Kabbalistic texts. Many books on the topic were actively translated from one language to the other during the same century. French scholar Jacques Matter traced Gnostic doctrines back to "*Persian Philosophy*" and Iranian ideas, transmitted indirectly through the Jewish medium. This opinion nowadays is widely respected in scholarship⁶⁷.

Adolph Jellinek (1821-1893), an Austrian rabbi and scholar, born in Moravia (nowadays a part of Czech Republic) was more interested in *Kabbalah* and its concepts. His main contribution included gathering data and continuation of small midrashic texts' research. He collected the anthology of Jewish Medieval midrashic texts traditionally known

⁶⁴ Ibid., 216.

⁶⁵ Guy G. Stroumsa, "Gnosis and Judaism in Nineteenth Century Christian Thought," in *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*. Vol.2. (New Jersey: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992), 51.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 58-59.

as *Bet Hamidrash*, (henceforth – BHM). A. Jellinek edited the collection himself and published it in six parts (1853-1878). His lifelong work consisted of a large amount of ancient and medieval midrashim materials and later it inspired even greater interest in Jewish apocalyptic literature. Dr. A. Jellinek's anthology of these texts was originally published in Hebrew as most of the texts were written in this language. Later, a translation of these collections into German (known as *Aus Israels Lehrhalle*, 1967) was made by Christian Hebraist Karl August Wünsche (1839 – 1913). Midrashic texts collected by Jellinek were translated only partially. British scholar Moses Gaster (1856 – 1939), a great collector of Cairo Genizah manuscripts, translated some of these texts for first time in English while dealing with Medieval Jewish manuscripts and folklore, and later included some of these in his series "*Studies and texts in Folk-lore, Magic, Romances, Apocrypha*" (Vol.1, London, 1925-28). The most comprehensive anthology of BHM texts translated into English has been published just recently in a book of John Reeves "*Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic. A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader*" (2005). In general, these texts have been studied scarcely and include several representatives of Medieval Jewish apocalyptic with an origin in the Near East dated approximately from the early 7th till middle of 12th centuries CE. This is to be considered a vital source for our concerns.

1.2. Review of recent major secondary studies.

Pseudepigrapha studies blossomed around the turn of the 19th century. It also arouse an interest in topical studies on afterlife (hell and heaven included). In general, the revival of concern was caused by continuous publications and sustained study of a remarkable series of manuscript discoveries over the course of the past century. The work of Qumran is considered as most famous in this regard. Prior to the the recovery of the Qumran Scrolls, perhaps the most significant manuscript found at the modern era was Solomon Schechter's retrieval of the Cairo Genizah textual archive at the close of the 20th century.

Recently, we could observe a renewed increase of interest in Jewish, Zoroastrian and Muslim concepts of afterlife (heaven and hell). Thereafter, it caused several fundamental secondary studies on the subject (Paul Raphael, James Russell, Martha Himmelfarb, Mitra Ara, Nerina Rustomji, John Reeves, Alan Segal, etc.).

One has to find ways through enormous amount of wast literature on afterlife amongst the mere phantasies, esoteric literature, etc. To admit, no considerable academic study has been done in this respect so far. Though, scholars of different backgrounds who have been dealing with the subject, have come from prominent world universities. Most of reasearches on this topic was made from a linguistic (Shaul Shaked, Amnon Netzer, Tamar Gindin) and historical perspectives (Choksy, Khanbaghi, Neusner, Boyce, Gafni). Just few attitudes may be considered as purely theological or at least philosophically oriented and text-based (Himmelfarb, Pavry, Segal, Jellinek, Reeves). As to my comprehension, all these attitudes should be considered aiming to develop a multidisciplinary approach to reach out for texts available in both Jewish and Zoroastrian literatures as a part of comparative religious study.

There are several scholars who have researched developments within a long tradition of Jewish apocalyptic/afterlife texts (Collins, Stone, Himmelfarb, etc.), still only few have been dealing with direct or indirect influences between Jewish and other Near Eastern religious traditions at the late antiquity and succeeding decades.

While reflecting the history of contemporary and recent scholarship, I would suggest first considering the scholarly publications related directly to the topic of afterlife in general, providing with brief results of their study. It is necessary to give an overview of Pseudepigrapha studies in the beginning.

Earlier topical study has produced several works of general material, such as that of Robert Henry Charles, late Professor of Biblical Greek (Trinity College, Dublin), who elaborated discussion in his major observation about belief in a future life “*A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*”, published in 1913. Charles had investigated a history of afterlife concept development from the Bible up to the 1st Century C.E. in apocalyptic literature. It should be noted that nowadays more Pseudepigrapha texts are discovered, than available to Charles at the time of his study. Charles enumerates systematically the views of Bible concerning the conceptions of soul, spirit, *Sheol*, *Gehenna*, and Heaven and proceeds to the provision of further eschatological developments of these in the 2nd Century BCE and the 1st Century BCE. His attempt to keep the same structure of the lay-out allows his work to be considered as a comprehensive guide on the subject. Charle’s first edition of Pseudepigrapha is supported by useful explanatory footnotes. However, no significant linguistic material is provided, since the piece is reference-based mainly.

George Nickelsburg wrote his investigation “*Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*” (1972) as a study in the field of history of theology to offer a detailed and exegetical study of the relevant intertestamental texts (including the Qumran Scrolls)⁶⁸. He reveals different theological conceptions (e.g., resurrection of the body and immortality of the soul) at the various stages of their history while resting on selected texts from Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha of the Old Testament. Nickelsburg provides broader exegetical discourses about death in cases of social injustice and religious persecution of the righteous, and of the Resurrection.

David Syme Russell’s (not to be confused with Jeffrey Burton Russell and James Robert Russell!) “*Between the Testaments*” (1960) is very similar to Charles “*Critical History*” as he provides a concise overview of the concepts of the Resurrection, the Messianic Kingdom, Sheol and the Final Judgement in their biblical origin and historical development. One of Russell’s most important conclusions is that *Sheol* was divided into two distinct compartments, one for the righteous and another for the wicked, which led to emergence of the conceptions of Paradise, Heaven, *Gehenna* in addition to *Sheol* itself⁶⁹.

The recent symposium article “*The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature*” (2000)⁷⁰ by John Collins, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, De Paul University, Chicago, Illinois, includes the consideration of major Pseudepigraphal writings and discusses various aspects of afterlife (resurrection, immortality of the soul, etc.). It also references to different foreign influences and literary parallels (Persian eschatology, the Egyptian mythology, Orphic tradition, Greek thought, the ancient Mediterranean world-view in general). Collins provides important notes on Enochic concept of *Sheol* and specifies the information about the origins of *Gehenna*. He as well extends the discourse on the concept of Resurrection.

Several stories were written and dedicated to afterlife including those of heaven and hell. Jeffrey Burton Russell (born 1934), an American historian of medieval Europe (including

⁶⁸ George Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*. Harvard Theological Studies XXVI (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 9-10.

⁶⁹ David Syme Russell, *Between the Testaments* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1960), 153.

⁷⁰ John Collins, “The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature” in *Death and Afterlife in the Early Rabbinic Sources: the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Early Midrash Compilations*, eds. Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner, SJLA. Part 4: Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection and the World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity (Leiden-Boston-Köln: E.J.BRILL, 2000).

history of theology) and religious studies scholar had prepared a work „*A History of Heaven. The Singing Silence*” (1997). It has a collection of various descriptions on heaven and paradise (including mystical visions) of writers, philosophers and artists since the ancient Jews till the Christian Middle Ages. Russel had also researched the emergence of concepts of Satan and hell from antiquity till the rise of Christianity. Edward Wright’s work „*The Early History of Heaven*” (2000) explores the concept of heaven in the ancient Near East from Egypt till the rise of early Islam. This is a comprehensive investigation supplied with a summary at the end each chapter. Carl Clemen (1865-1940), German historian of religion and theologian and one of influential representatives of German religious studies of the end of 19th and the first half of the 20th century, had published a comprehensive work titled „*Life after Death in the World Religions*” (*Das Leben nach dem Tode im Glauben der Menschheit*, 1920) where he provides an overview of belief in afterlife from tribal times up until the emergence of modern views at the beginning of the 20th century. The text is supplied by a lot of pictures and has systematized comments.

Princeton professor Martha Himmelfarb, a scholar of Second Temple Judaism, in her fundamental and classical “*Tours of Hell: an Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature*” (1983) had made an attempt to systematize emergence of concept and genre of “tours of hell” (terminology invented by herself) from late antiquity up till early Middle ages, some references to Dante’s *Divine Comedy* included. Her research is especially important for further explorations on the same topic. Himmelfarb researches the social context of measure-for-measure punishments in Ancient Greece, Rome and Israel; however she surprisingly omits Babylonian and Persian contexts. It is obvious that she doesn’t deal with this particularly since is more concerned on Judeo-Christian texts in Greco-Roman (Hellenistic Mediterranean region) and early Medieval sources. The only episode mentioned Sumerian „Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld” where goddess is hung from a stake⁷¹. Although Himmelfarb has repeatedly suggested primary influence of Greek ideas⁷² on *tours of hell*, she keeps an open issue of the possibility of other origin by saying: „...*The demonstrative explanations characteristic of the tours of hell are influenced by a very ancient form of exegesis that appears in Mesopotamian literature. No one would suggest, however, that the*

⁷¹ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 84.

⁷² Richard Bauckham also thinks Himmelfarb has overemphasized this aspect - Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 208-209.

authors of the Jewish apocalypses of the Hellenistic period read cuneiform. Rather, the form was known to them because it appeared in a variety of texts with which they were well acquainted. Nor has the question of the ultimate origin of the tour form in Jewish literature been resolved by pointing to *I Enoch* and *Ezekiel*. Should the tours be understood as going back to Babylonia? Or are they native Jewish developments?"⁷³. Though, this substantial question is not answered by the author in the three following chapters of her investigation since it has not been her very task.

M.Himmelfarb points out her three main objectives: – 1) to form a picture of the types of sources probably drawn by the authors of the earliest *tours of hell*; 2) to point out certain distinctive sins and punishments that appear in several Pseudepigraphic texts and to use these to illuminate the interrelations between various texts; and finally 3) to study a comprehensive evolution of these texts from the Second Temple Period up to the Middle Ages⁷⁴. Thus Himmelfarb's study is mostly focused on the transitions within a particular textual tradition rather than is supposed to deal with the possible sources of influence from outside: she determines it to be a task for a historian⁷⁵.

Himmelfarb demonstrates her scepticism in regards to the suggestion that AWN tour had affected Christian tours of hell. Such assumption would cause a reasonable problem of dating: thus she considers Christian tours to be of much earlier origin than Zoroastrian one⁷⁶. Besides AWN and Muslim texts of the late Middle Ages were influenced by long-time preserved Judeo-Christian tradition⁷⁷. More importantly, it is beyond scholar's scope and concern to deal with this issue in detail.

The fundamental study of Richard Bauckham "*The Fate of the Dead. Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*" (1998) is dedicated to the search of interrelations between several texts of Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition (incl. Apocalypse of Peter and

⁷³ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 68-69. Terms invented by Himmelfarb - *tours of hell* - a particular literary genre of visionary apocalyptic texts bearing common features (tour form, a hero, a heavenly revealer and descriptions of punishment in hell (paradise can be as part of these tours)); *demonstrative explanations* - a technical term invented to denote dialogical structure of *tours of hell* comprising questions-and-answers used in cases of hell punishment scenes to explain each of them and reveal an ethical consequence.

⁷⁴ Martha Himmelfarb, op. cit., 69.

⁷⁵ Martha Himmelfarb, op. cit., 69.

⁷⁶ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 48. Of course, now we know about AWN as an early spoken tradition preserved lately in writing particularly emphasized by Mary Boyce.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

Paul). Conclusions similar to Himmelfarb's are reached, indeed "*some aspects of her work in more detail*" are developed⁷⁸. His major conclusion is that Jewish and Christian tours of hell are an expression of the belief in the active punishment of the wicked that follows the death immediately (individual eschatology). The doctrine of the last judgement (universal eschatology) was developed in Judaism and Christianity throughout the 1st-2nd cent. C.E.⁷⁹.

Alan Segal's recent work „*Life After Death. A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West*” (2004) according to author is dedicated to a study of sociology of the afterlife, from ancient Egypt till the rise of modern Muslim and Jewish fundamentalism. There is a subchapter on Iranian Zoroastrian views on afterlife in this study. First of all, the author considers Persian and then Greek notions since both of these had affected the innovative thinking on afterlife within the period of the Second Temple. Segal considers these two notions as the most important in the shaping of Jewish concepts of afterlife that later entered Christianity and onwards left farreaching effects on religious traditions of the West⁸⁰. Represented by the synthesis of Zoroastrian and Hellenistic thought, "*the Jewish notion entertained, both accepting and rejecting, aspects of Persian and Greek thought*"⁸¹. According to Segal, the major difficulty of studying Iran is the issue with dating of Zoroastrian texts since the settings for cultural borrowing⁸² remain unclear. This issue is caused by the fact that many sacred texts were have not been preserved in their original form⁸³. Nevertheless, it mostly concerns the ancient tradition of Zoroastrianism and does not impact specifically the study of our interest. Segal suggests that in order to assert any Persian influence it is necessary to distinguish more sophisticated medieval Zoroastrian traditions from the earlier traditions⁸⁴. Segal is convinced of mutual influences between Zoroastrianism and Jewish apocalyptic in medieval period. Indeed, he states the issue of Jewish impact on Zoroastrianism as open, however does not offer a clear exposition. The author rejects an exclusive one-sided influence, however he believes that later apocalypses were widely

⁷⁸ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 206.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 206-207.

⁸⁰ Alan Segal, *Life After Death*, 173, 175.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 175, 197.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 197.

affected by Manichaeism as missionary movement⁸⁵. Segal adds several notes on AWN, too. He dates it as a text of the 9th century, written after the Muslim invasion of Iran, and draws parallels with Jewish *hekhalot* texts and Christian apocalypses involving heavenly journeys⁸⁶. This aspect is reviewed in detail in author's later article "*Religious Experience and the Construction of the Transcendent Self*" (2006)⁸⁷.

Professor Alan Bernstein from the University of Arizona, a specialist on medieval history, has published a systematic exposition on emergence of concepts of death and otherworldly retribution since the early days in ancient Near East up to the rise of early Christianity, the church fathers and Dante. The independent study "*The Formation of Hell. Death and Retribution in the Ancient and early Christian Worlds*" (1993) is text-based in general, so to say, "*the literal hell*"⁸⁸. The concept of hell is revealed through the lenses of classical sources, Old and New Testaments, Pseudepigrapha and several Medieval apocalypses and draws significant conclusions for further study. Some of these conclusions relevant to our study will be referred to as we proceed.

Another work on hell, abundantly illustrated, is Alice Turner's "*The History of Hell*" (1993). It shall not be considered as purely scholar study since is written in terms of the history of arts and culture, however it relies on previous academic studies in the field. Yet this book contains important references to Zoroastrian (including AWN⁸⁹) and medieval apocalyptic tours of hell.

There were several attempts to publish anthologies of translated medieval Jewish apocalyptic texts, including Moses Gaster's anthology "*Studies and texts in Folk-lore, Magic, Romances, Apocrypha*" (1925-28) already mentioned in our study. Lately, more extended translations of texts became available to be an important step forward in the field of Medieval Jewish visionary genre texts' study. First of all, anthropologist's Raphael Patai's "*A Book of Jewish Legends*" (1981) shall be mentioned. Apart from Biblical,

⁸⁵ Ibid., 181, 192-193, 197.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 195.

⁸⁷ Alan Segal, "Religious Experience and the Construction of the Transcendent Self" in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. De Conick (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).

⁸⁸ Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell. Death and Retribution in the Ancient and early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1993), IX-X.

⁸⁹ Alice Turner, *The History of Hell* (New York-San Diego-London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 18.

Apocryphal, Talmudic, Kabbalistic and folk materials translated anew by the author from original sources, it scopes important portions of medieval midrashic texts, such as *Otzar Midrashim* (“Treasury of Midrashim”, ed. By J.D.Eisenstein, New York, 1915, a collection of 200 minor Midrashim in the original Hebrew and Aramaic with introductory notes), *Masekhet Gehinnom* (“Tractate of Hell”), *Gan Eden ve Gehinnom* (tractate “Garden of Eden and Hell”), *Seder Mahanot*, translated mostly from BHM, and a collection of midrashic texts edited by Adolph Jellinek and arranged by topics. Another updated anthology with valuable introductions and notes in this line is done by Simcha Paull Rapahel. His study “*Jewish Views of the Afterlife*” (2004) includes chapters and analysis of Jewish texts on death and afterlife from Biblical to contemporary approaches. The translations of Jewish visionary tours from Medieval midrash listed in the book are most important for our particular concern. Rapahel reworked and partially amended previous basic Gasters translations, eliminating the use of King James English and carefully comparing them to other versions of the same textual materials provided by Jellinek, Eisenstein, Wertheimer and others⁹⁰. The anthology quotes the following texts (some already listed in the present study): *Masekhet Gehinnom*, *Masekhet Hibbut Ha-Kever* (“Tractate of the Pangs of the Grave”), *Masekhet Gan Eden* (tractate “Garden of Eden”), *Maaseh de R. Joshua ben Levi* (“Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and the Seven Compartments of Gan Eden”), *Seder Gan Eden* (tractate “Garden of Eden”), *Gedulat Moshe* (“The Revelation of Moses”), and finally Immanuel ben Solomon of Rome (Immanuel Ha-Romi) *Ha Tophet V’Ha Eden* (“Hell and Heaven”), Jewish Renaissance poetical achievement reminiscent to Dante’s *Divina Commedia*⁹¹. The latest accomplishment of the corpus of Medieval apocalyptic Jewish texts was done by Prof. John Reeves, who works closely in the field of Qumran studies. His notable anthology “*Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic. A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader*” (2005) can be considered as the most comprehensive collection of translated and commented texts from BHM in English available so far.

Martha Himmelfarb’s just published book “*The Apocalypse: A Brief History*” (2010) deals substantially with the early apocalyptic texts rather than visionary midrash; yet it adds

⁹⁰ Simcha P.Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife* (Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 166.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 218.

few new insights and conclusions to the proceeding discussion on the subject. The author researches the tradition of apocalyptic texts. In particular, she studies so-called ascent apocalypses (including the *hekhalot* texts), both Jewish and Christian, through the Middle Ages, including some aspects of development during the modern period. Himmelfarb emphasizes that she leaves out “*Middle Persian texts that parallel the apocalypses or Muslim adaptations of the genre*”⁹². Her main objective is to consider those apocalyptic works from late antiquity and the Middle Ages (in the Byzantine era and after Muslim conquest) that seem to have common themes (the ascent to heaven, the heavenly Messiah, the heavenly Temple, etc.) and to trace their development over the centuries including their potential impact on Dante and the Jewish *hekhalot* texts⁹³. However it should be fairly noted that in general this small book seems to have less academic relevance than the previous fundamental *Tours of Hell*: no specific textual details are considered. Instead, the author provides an overall description of the developing ideas.

And now the review of scholarly literature on Zoroastrian concepts, texts and mutual connections with other religions shall be approached.

Cultural historian Norman Cohn with his study “*Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: the Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*” (1993, largely inspired by Mary Boyce) provides extended references to ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Vedic Indian, Zoroastrian, Jewish apocalyptic and Christian traditions on emerging views of the world to come and final world consummation. This is a well-founded attempt to prove that eschatology originated and formed basis for later Jewish and Christian thinking. This work contains significant contributions to Zoroastrian material and demonstrates author’s wide knowledge in the area, although it is primarily engaged with collective, not individual eschatology. Author’s main conclusion in terms of our particular concern is that Zoroastrianism did influence deeply Jewish apocalyptic thinking (including Qumran and “*the Jesus sect, transformed into the Christian Church*”)⁹⁴.

There are several scholars of Iranian background who studied the related topics. Let us consider some earlier works first.

⁹² Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse*, 5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁴ Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, 222-226.

Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry in his early work “*The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life: From Death to the Individual Judgment*” (1929) is mostly concerned with the imagery of *Chinvat Bridge* and pre-judgement scenes in *Gāthic*, later *Avestan* and Pahlavi writings. This specific study is very detailed and illuminating in all respects, however it doesn't in detail consider the descriptions of final destinies of the sinners and the righteous. There are no descriptions of hell, intermediate place and heaven retributions presented. The author had deliberately refrained from dealing with Zoroastrian influences on Judaism and Christianity as well as their mutual relations⁹⁵. Pavry had depicted the final destiny in very detail: references are made to three days and night's period of souls howering, meeting with *Daēna*, Judgement and Crossing of the *Chinvat bridge*, yet there are just very few references to heaven or hell in particular.

Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla (1875-1956), a Zoroastrian priest and scholar, in his fundamental treatise “*History of Zoroastrianism*” (1938) had written a couple of systematic chapters on Zoroastrian perceptions of death and life after death. It is very similar to Pavry's work in terms of references to Zoroastrian concepts of death (including specific burial customs) since these have basic explanations in Pahlavi religious texts. Significant and comprehensive notes are provided on the nature of Zoroastrian hell, situated in the northern regions. It is described and measured in striking detail. Dhalla had also included a chapter on hell punishments and demonstrated their application in the text of AWN and their correspondence to Zoroastrian legislation⁹⁶.

Aptin Khanbaghi, a scholar on Iranian history and religions in his “*The Fire, the Star and the Cross. Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran*” (2006) explores the history of religious minorities (non-Muslim communities in particular): Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians living on Iranian soil before the rise of early Islamic civilisation. Khanbaghi offers fresh and innovative looks at Iranian history of Islamic period (particularly, 13th – 17th cent.) His concern is based upon various Medieval sources and the large amount of selected secondary studies that may as well provide some reasonable insights in regards to the earlier periods of history (including the Sassanian).

⁹⁵ Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life: From Death to the Individual Judgment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), Preface, VIII.

⁹⁶ Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism* (1938). This electronic edition copyright 2004 by Joseph H. Peterson and Soli Dastur.
<http://www.avesta.org/dhalla/history6.htm#chap44>

The author is fully aware that the Zoroastrians as a minority community in Islamic lands⁹⁷ were studied little. He is convinced that AWN was written by Persian Zoroastrian poet Zartusht Bahram (Zartosht Bahram e Pazhdo) in the 13th century during the Mongol invasion⁹⁸, and the text itself contains many historically oriented references. It is a fact that in general, Persian literature flourished during the Mongol period, consequently leading to the rise of Judeo-Persian literature⁹⁹. Khanbaghi has also significant points on the Zoroastrian-Jewish encounter; however his particular interest is paid to Zoroastrian-Jewish relations in pre-Islamic Sassanian Iran. Zoroastrianism was a state religion of Iran since 224 CE, declared by the Sassanian rule. Judaism and Christianity were able to flourish and develop during this period. Khanbaghi states that under Sassanians, the Jews of Iran as a diaspora used to be the largest Jewish population in the world, even exceeding the number of Jews of Palestine¹⁰⁰. The Jews were politically, financially and culturally active and influential during this period: finally, the Babylonian Talmud was produced in Iran (220-500 CE). This Talmud version is considered as more complete than the Palestinian Talmud produced in the Roman/Byzantine Empire since Jews chose the Persians instead of the Byzantines. Paradoxically, Jews were fighting on the side of the Persians when Muslims invaded Iranian land¹⁰¹.

Jamsheed Choksy, a specialist in the field of Iranian studies, represents the younger generation of scholars in the field. In the “*Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society*” (1997), he deals with scholarly less explored aspects of history and transformations of religious minorities in medieval Iran, although he considers the earlier period of the 7th to the 13th centuries CE. Author’s main focus is put on transformations of medieval Iranian Zoroastrian society into dominant Muslim established modes of communication that lead to subsequent subjugation first in politics and religion and then in socioeconomics. Choksy is generally convinced that Muslim civilization was influenced significantly by Zoroastrian faith (a religion that historically is closely linked to ethnicity) when encountering at initial interactions from the 7th up until the late 13th

⁹⁷ Aptin Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the Star and the Cross*, 1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

century¹⁰². As a matter of our concern, Choksy's important study lacks some aspects of Jewish-Zoroastrian encounter in the particular period and is mostly focused on Zoroastrian (priestly or magian) - Muslim social (chiefly studied by the author), political and religious relations and treatment of Jewish and Christian minorities under Islamic rule on Iranian land. The only important point made in a comparative perspective is a blending, or more precisely, the integrating of Zoroastrian and Muslim legends' transmissions that happened through the communication at the level of both elites, the emerging ruling class: priests (the priestly class known as *magi*), scribes and governors; for instance, Muslim hagiography was binded to Zoroastrian legend, so to say, Muslim version of Zoroastrian lore¹⁰³. Life stories of Muhammad and Zarathushtra were told in similar manner and included common themes of revelatory visions, prophetic missions, etc.¹⁰⁴. Choksy writes – "*Medieval Muslim writers living in the former Sasanian Empire would have had many opportunities and motives for picking up particular Zoroastrian tales and then reworking them into Islamic contexts for religiopolitical reasons*"¹⁰⁵. And he continues, "*..Themes originating among Iranians reached the Arabs and combined with the Judeo-Christian model of the holy man to shape the development of Islamic sacred biography*"¹⁰⁶. This was the process of legitimizing new prophet Muhammad within previous biblical, Judeo-Christian and Zoroastrian prophetic succession scheme¹⁰⁷. Later, we will notice this particularity well demonstrated in similarities between Muslim and Zoroastrian as well as Jewish visionary accounts on Ascension of a prophet; whether it would be Muhammad, Arda Wirāz or Moses. The author goes even further and points out that Zoroastrians (only since the 9th century CE) having made close contact with Muslims, Jews and Christians reshaped some aspects of Zarathushtra's mission (long time after his death) according to prophetic models found in the Bible and the Qur'an¹⁰⁸. In the first centuries of Arab invasion (during the postconquest era), an identification of this group with its predecessors of apocalyptic doomsday led to the revision of Zoroastrian concept of prophecy (established oracular tradition) in its apocalyptic form;

¹⁰² Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 65, 66.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰⁷ Jamsheed Choksy, *op.cit.*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

mostly in terms of new apocalyptic prophecies added from the 12th to the 14th century¹⁰⁹. The fears of Muslim dominance even pushed the rise of Jewish messianism, Christian apocryphal tales and Mandaean apocalyptic literature (in the late 7th century)¹¹⁰. This prophetic and apocalyptic narratives transcended particular groups by creating a bridge between history and religion¹¹¹.

There are also several books of general relevance to the topic in terms of purely historical perspective that refer to some aspects of Zoroastrian-Judaism encounter in particular. Two works by Richard Foltz, a Harvard historian of comparative religions, shall be mentioned: “*Religions of the Silk Road. Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*” (1999) and “*Spirituality in the Land of the Noble. How Iran Shaped the World’s Religions*” (2004). Author’s main focus is put on Iranian world in terms of emergence and transmission of the world’s major religious traditions. Zoroastrianism was for the first time codified and documented for the first time in the 3rd century CE under Sasanians. Besides, the author expresses his scepticism about generalizations of Zoroastrianism as ruling entire ancient Iran. Foltz points out that perhaps, Sasanian Zoroastrianism as an established phenomenon does not necessarily apply to the religious beliefs and practices of ancient Iran¹¹². This is a warning not to project “Zoroastrian” tradition in its Sasanian form back onto previous Achaemenid and Parthian era Iranians¹¹³. In this regard, Zoroastrian religion is broadly defined as a structure of myths, deities, symbols, and rituals with diverse range of elements (including non-Iranian regional elements) in a time line and locale¹¹⁴. In “*Religions of the Silk Road*”, there are few pages that cover the issue of an encounter between Iranian and Jewish religion. Since 722 B.C.E. when the Assyrians destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the first presence of Israelites in Central Asia involved a long-distance trade in particular; however Foltz is more confident that commercial engagement began in postexilic times¹¹⁵. There is no direct evidence of Jewish presence in Central Asia earlier than the Achaemenid period (550–330 BCE)

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 54.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 56.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 68.

¹¹² Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road. Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century* (New York: St.Martin’s Griffin, 1999), 28.

¹¹³ Richard Foltz, op.cit., 28.

¹¹⁴ Richard Foltz, op.cit., 28.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 31.

according to the Book of Ester (composed in the 4th century BCE)¹¹⁶. 1st-3rd centuries CE testify that Jews lived along Silk Road. Thus, the major conclusions from Foltz's review can be summarized. Persian Jews were actively engaged in commerce between Persian and Roman Empires, especially in the silk trade to China¹¹⁷. Trade and related cultural environment had served as a medium for Iranian beliefs and concepts to travel and find their way into Jewish religion. Ancient Iranian cosmology evolved in later developments in Greek philosophy, Jewish, Christian and Muslim mysticism¹¹⁸. According to Foltz, the Book of Ester serves as a good example of early interaction of Iranian and Israelite religious traditions. Besides, Iranian eschatology was uniquely developed into Jewish apocalypticism, then a Hellenic and later Christian concept followed¹¹⁹. All in all, Iranian ideas infiltrated Jewish culture through Iranian Jews who were immersed in Iranian culture and served as transmitters of ideas to other Jewish communities of the Mediterranean world¹²⁰.

“*Spirituality in the Land of the Noble*” is a work more devoted to the interaction of Iranian religious ideas and the ways they shaped other world religious traditions. Some aspects of Zoroastrian-Judaism encounter are revisited by Foltz, including influence of Iranian ideas throughout various periods. The First Jewish diaspora to appear in Iran established a long-distance trade networks with other locations and lead accordingly to the wide spread of religious ideas: consequently, Foltz's idea is developed further¹²¹. The area of the stated interaction included territories from Egypt and Greece to the borders of China and India. The lines of actual transmitters were prominent ancestors of Iranian Jews. Foltz is fully convinced that the idea of Satan resembling Zoroastrian *Ahriman* in Christian and Muslim traditions is most likely transmitted to the Semitic world exclusively by the Jews of Iran¹²². Besides, Hellenized Jews who connected Jewish communities in Iran via trade networks, “*acted as cultural filters transforming and transmitting Iranian stories and concepts throughout the eastern Mediterranean world*”¹²³. Due to rise of Iranian eschatologies, Jewish messianic and apocalyptic movements arose in Mesopotamia and elsewhere. The important

¹¹⁶ Richard Foltz, op.cit., 31.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 31, 32.

¹¹⁸ Richard Foltz, op.cit., 32.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 33.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹²¹ Richard Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble*, 47.

¹²² Ibid., 49.

¹²³ Ibid., 51.

point made by Foltz is that Jews constituted the majority at some parts of Mesopotamia when Arab armies conquered the Sasanian empire in 640s¹²⁴.

Jacob Neusner has published an interesting case study titled “*Judaism and Zoroastrianism at the Dusk of Late Antiquity: How Two Ancient Faiths Wrote Down Their Great Traditions*” (1993) where he compares Zoroastrian Pahlavi *Rivayat* to the Babylonian Talmud in respect of instructions on laws of family, social order, purity, etc., discussed and formulated by Zoroastrian priests and Judaic sages. This work however does not pretend to be a subject of comparative literature, religion or law¹²⁵. Neither it is a discourse on apocalyptic visionary literature that touches more specific legislative aspects from normative rabbinic tradition. Still, it brings forth some issues important to be added to our general discussion prior to the exposition of our thesis.

There was no separate study on the book of AWN so far but the scarce general assumptions that reappear in several articles or books on Zoroastrianism. More extended commentaries have been provided in addition to the translated text. First English translation of AWN came to light in the second half of the 19th century when the text¹²⁶ by Martin Haug (1827-1876), a German orientalist with academic background in prestigious universities of Stuttgart, Tübingen, Göttingen, Bonn, Heidelberg, and Munich was published. He spent some 20 years in India as a professor of Sanskrit and wrote several important reference books regarding the languages of India and Persia. Also, Haug is the author of the glossary of the AWN¹²⁷. Due to the ambiguity inherent to Pahlavi script, the name of the protagonist of the story may also be transliterated as “Arda Wiraf”, “Arda Wiraz” or “Arda Viraz”. The “Arda” of the name is an epithet of Viraf/Wiraz and is approximately translateable as “truthful” or “righteous”. The book is dated differently by various scholars; we will be dealing with this in

¹²⁴ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁵ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Zoroastrianism at the Dusk of Late Antiquity: How Two Ancient Faiths Wrote Down Their Great Traditions* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993), Preface, X.

¹²⁶ *The Book of Arda Viraf*, trans. and ed. by H.Jamasp Asa and M.Haug (Bombay and London: GOVERNMENT CENTRAL BOOK MESSRS. TRUBNER AND CO., 1872).

¹²⁷ Martin Haug, *Glossary and Index of the Pahlavi Text of the Book of Arda Viraf* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2009).

detail in separate chapter. More recent translations of AWN are now available in English¹²⁸ and Russian¹²⁹.

James Robert Russell (born in 1953), prof. of Ancient Near Eastern, Iranian and Armenian studies (recently transferred from Harvard University to Hebrew University of Jerusalem), has recently published a monumental selected collection of previously published articles “*Armenian and Iranian Studies*” (2004)¹³⁰ which provides a wide reflection on various aspects of Iranian interaction with other local and regional religious and cultural traditions, including aspects of biblical, Pseudepigraphic, Christian, Mithraic, Manichaean, freemasonry, apocalyptic, visionary (especially of Armenian tradition), Medieval poetic, mythological and heroic epics and folklore, pagan, esoteric and mystical movements, heresies, and mystery cults. This collection is an enormous resource for further in-depth topical study. Its time span includes ancient, medieval and modern periods of Armeniaca (Armenian studies) and pre-Islamic period of Iranica (Iranian studies). However, we will not deal in detail with this corpus of articles.

Mitra Ara recent publication “*Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Traditions*” (2008) studies emergence and formation of Vedic Indian and Zoroastrian Iranian individual eschatological beliefs and doctrines (death, judgment, heaven and hell, incl. concepts of God and soul) within broader context of Indo-Iranian (i.e., Aryan) religion as a complex system. To attain this, she uses the inter-disciplinary approach (incl. available artistic, iconographical, archaeological, cultural, religious and literature mediums). In other words, this work is considered as another significant research on afterlife which adds important conclusions to the previous studies listed earlier. Ara is convinced that the earlier scholarship done on Judeo-Christian (partially also Islamic) eschatology and apocalypticism was extensive, still it lacked an adequate examination in the context of Iranian religions concepts, at least as a result of an external influence on them¹³¹. She considers emerging Islamic views on hell (*jahannam*) and heaven also within this line of developments. These topics in recent years

¹²⁸ *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, The Iranian “Divina Comedia”, ed. By F.Vahman, // Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies. Monograph Series. No.53. (London and Malmo: Curzon Press Ltd., 1986).

¹²⁹ *Пехлевийская Божественная Комедия*, Книга о праведном Виразе и другие тексты. Памятники письменности Востока СХХVI (Москва: «Восточная литература», 2001).

¹³⁰ James Robert Russell, *Armenian and Iranian Studies*. Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004). Henceforth AIS.

¹³¹ Mitra Ara, *Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Tradition*, 4-5.

have paid great attention in regards to the explored phenomenon of clinical near-death experiences. However, the examination of the same topics (journey to another world, visions of afterlife) in the context of cross-cultural and religious perspectives of the oldest religious texts of the Indians and the Iraninans was left mostly intact. In addition, Ara expressed a concern that her effort would generate enthusiasm for further in-depth study on Indo-Iranian religious system¹³².

Reverend Clair Tisdall in this captivating early comparative study of religions “*The Original Sources of the Quran*” (1905)¹³³ wrote a separate chapter on Zoroastrian elements in the Quran and traditions of Islam. The main focus is put on Muhammad’s Night Journey (*Miraj*) and AWN. Other Zoroastrian Pahlavi Scriptures (such as the *Avesta* and *Vendidād*), pseudepigraphal and early Medieval Christian texts (The Apocalypse of Paul and the Testament of Abraham) are referred to, either. Muslim as well as Christian and Jewish legends make the use of AWN legend. Tisdall traces the AWN account earlier before the rise of Islam (some 400 years before Muhammad’s *Hijrah*) and succeeding legends of *Miraj*; he states that the former “*served as a model for the Muhammadan legend of the ascent of Muhammad*”¹³⁴.

Nerina Rustomji in her new book on islamic concepts of heaven and hell „*The Garden and the Fire. Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture*” (2009) expressed through allegorical terms „garden” and „fire”, rejects any specific roots spreading from Zoroastrian or Jewish traditional imagery¹³⁵. Her carefull study is not concerned with the questions of origins of concepts of heaven and hell. She rather researches a historical development (since the 7th century CE) of these ideas of afterworld in terms of textual and social perspectives.

¹³² Ibid., 226.

¹³³ Clair Tisdall, *The Original Sources of the Quran* (London - New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1905). On-line text is available at: http://www.muhammadanism.org/Tisdall/sources_quran/default.htm

¹³⁴ Ibid., Chapter V.

¹³⁵ Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire*, XIX. Paradoxically, for example, the very term „paradise” appears to be of Persian origin (*paira daeza*) - later usages of this term in Jewish (as *pardes*), Greek (as *paradisos*) and Muslim (as *firdaws*) traditions convey the way it was transmitted and transformed. Iranian „paradise” is an expression of a garden, a walled enclosure consisting of quadrangle yard, often with pavilion or fountain in the middle, supplied with birds, flowing water and various plants – trees, shrubs, flowers. Although this type of garden is generally known as „Islamic”, it is rather an Islamicized form of the model from pre-Islamic Iran. For further details see Richard Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble*, 137.

Rustomji work is especially important due to the inclusion of extended accounts of medieval Muslim visionary texts (hadiths) and the tradition of *Mi'raj* story.

Recently (precisely, on February 10, 2006), a scholar Eileen Gardiner has launched a website <http://www.hell-on-line.org/> hosting a collection of approximately 100 visionary texts that describe hell in such world religions as the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Zoroastrian, Islamic and Jewish traditions from 2000 BCE to the present day. This work can be considered as a comprehensive guide / introduction to hell concepts, written in more or less a popular way. The website is still under construction and more data are expected to be added. The same author has recently edited a comprehensive anthology of Zoroastrian texts on hell¹³⁶.

Just to bring this review to the conclusion, I would like to add that Irano-Judaica and the study in related fields are now coming to its resurgence. Prof. James Robert Russell (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel) is currently working on Armenian visionary literature and a book dedicated to the culture of the Parsi Zoroastrians of India¹³⁷. Dr. Albert de Jong, professor of comparative religion (University of Leiden, Netherlands) who previously worked and wrote extensively in the field of Zoroastrian tradition is now working on “*The Religious History of the Sasanian Empire (224-642 CE)*” to become the 5th volume in *A History of Zoroastrianism* series. This research project is dedicated not only to the history of Zoroastrianism (a “profile” of Sasanian Zoroastrianism in the multiple contexts of the Empire) itself, but also the interaction between Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, Manichaeans, and Mandaeans¹³⁸. At the same time Shaul Shaked (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel), a former professor of Iranian studies and comparative religion, is working on a new Pahlavi dictionary. No doubt, more studies and research in the field to follow in upcoming decades.

¹³⁶ Eileen Gardiner, ed., *Zoroastrian Hell. Visions, Tours and Descriptions of the Infernal Otherworld* (New York: Italica Press, 2006).

¹³⁷ James Robert Russell, *AIS*, XV.

¹³⁸ This information is provided according to <http://www.hum.leiden.edu/religion/organisation/institute-staff/dejong.html>

IV. Zoroastrianism-Judaism interaction: general assumptions and conclusions for a detailed study.

1.1. Babylonian and Zoroastrian-Jewish influences.

A recent note by Alan Segal defines the influence of Iran onto Israel as “*a true mystery*”¹³⁹.

To provide a general overview of the discussion, Zoroastrian-Judaism encounter has not been researched much, at least in details, as one could notice earlier. The interest on the subject increased in the 19th century.

Secondary studies often present statements in favour of Zoroastrian influence upon Jewish (afterlife) concepts. In this respect, the traditional view is that Judaism as a religion was composed intensively during the period of Babylonian exile (586–537 BCE) when it encountered a strong Zoroastrian impact, either.

In the late 19th century, scholars arguments gave preference to Babylonian, rather than Iranian influences¹⁴⁰. In this regard, Guy Stroumsa is convinced that a clear Babylonian influence on the formation of Zoroastrian theology itself (developments “within tradition”) shall not be ignored. According to Wilhelm Bousset, a German scholar representing *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, there should be a possibility of a synthesis of both Babylonian and Iranian influences “*in the crystallization of Jewish traditions*”¹⁴¹. Bousset’s original conclusion was that both Zoroastrianism and Judaism were dependent upon Babylonian tradition, indeed each in its own specific way¹⁴². Stroumsa indicates that the general position of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* is considered old fashioned in modern scholarship; and more detailed search is defined in specific areas of transmission from older traditions to Gnostic and Manichaean circles through “*the proximate channels*”, focusing on

¹³⁹ Alan Segal, *Life After Death*, 175.

¹⁴⁰ Guy G. Stroumsa, “A Zoroastrian Origin to the Sefirot?” in *Irano - Judaica III*, eds. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994), 31.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁴² Guy G. Stroumsa, *op.cit.*, 32.

Jewish traditions, although the Iranian path is still approached less frequently¹⁴³. It seems that this is caused by a very limited number of scholars working in the field. Thus, also a topic of specific Iranian or Zoroastrian influences to demonstrate exemplary textual evidence remains unexplored for the most part.

In regard to Zoroastrianian-Jewish interaction, various suggestions were made, depending on each researcher's specific concerns and perspectives and, accordingly, different directions of their studies. It should be noted that the majority of scholars dealing on this topic in general do agree upon the primacy of Zoroastrian influence. Only few favor the prevalence of Judaic concepts over Zoroastrian. However, in any case it is impossible to claim that Judaism would have remained unchanged under foreign rules, especially Persian.

Judaism and Zoroastrianism were in close contact since the destruction of the First Temple (early in the 6th cent. B.C.): Jews lived under Iranian empires of the Achaemenian, the Parthian and the Sasanian dynasties and should have been profoundly influenced by culture and religion of these¹⁴⁴. Jews thus remained under foreign dominance during the first eight centuries of the Common Era. Most of the surrounding cultures were even of different background, i.e. Greece, Rome, Persia, and emerging Islamic culture.

The influence of Zoroastrianism on early Judaism and later on Christianity was considered a disputable question amongst academicians for quite a long time. In the beginning of the 20th century, adherents of *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* Wilhelm Bousset, Richard August Reitzenstein and Edward Meyer supported the idea of Iranian influence on Jewish and Christian apocalyptic, messianism and eschatology. British scholar Mary Boyce is considered as one of modern defenders of Zoroastrian influence on Judaism from Iranists while Norman Cohn from a perspective of cultural historians.

Scholar Adolph Franck, although primarily concerned with Kabbalistic doctrines, has made some unsystemized clues in regard to Jewish-Zoroastrian interaction, including the concept of afterlife. According to Franck, "*no nation exerted upon the Jews such deep influence as the Persians; [...] no moral power could have penetrated so deeply into their spirit as the religious system of Zoroaster with its long train of traditions and*

¹⁴³ Guy G. Stroumsa, op.cit., 32.

¹⁴⁴ James Robert Russel, „Our father Abraham and the Magi,” in: *AIS*, ed. James Russel, Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 221.

commentaries”¹⁴⁵. He refers to the fragment of *Hibut Hakever* (“the Pangs of the Grave”) on postmortem judgement in the grave and considers it as a concept almost literally taken from the Zohar¹⁴⁶. He concludes that “*the civilization of ancient Persia, left numerous traces in all parts of Judaism; in its celestial mythology as represented by the angels; in its infernal mythology, and, finally, in the practice of the outward cult*”¹⁴⁷. Several allusions are made to Zend Avesta and *Kabbala* as well as Talmud, yet the ultimate original source remains to be Zoroastrian religion, that is, Zoroastrian origin of the Kabbalistic philosophy¹⁴⁸. Adolph Jellinek specifies that the *Kabbalah* is not a copy of Zoroastrianism, but rather an evolution of the latter connected to various modifications¹⁴⁹.

Within the modern period of scholarship, Prof. Shaul Shaked has lead a discussion in the context of shaping or re-shaping developments within Judaism. In regard to the study of elements of Persian influence in Judaism, Shaked is convinced that the task is complicated when considered in general attempting to trace it through different periods of diverse history. This problem exists due to our imperfect knowledge of only a few available original literary sources that survived from the ancient period. Should the fact that most of Persian literature belongs to a relatively late period be acknowledged, it will lead to the conclusion that Jewish material is dated earlier than the corresponding Iranian. Accordingly, Shaked continues to argue against a claim of some scholars of Irano-Judaica who are attempting to prove the vice-versa borrowings in this regard.

Further, we will deal with arguments against Zoroastrian influence upon Judaism, stating the probability of Jewish influence upon Zoroastrians later. Anyhow, it is not reasonable to come to a conclusion that supposes the developments of parallel notions in both religious cultures taking place independently of each other¹⁵⁰. My further research will draw

¹⁴⁵ Adolph Franck, *The Kabbalah or the Religious Philosophy of the Hebrews* (New York: The Kabbalah Publishing Company, 1926), 286. Full text available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/rph/rph22.htm>

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 307.

¹⁴⁹ Adolph Jellinek, *Preface to the German Translation of the First French Edition*. Adolph Franck, *The Kabbalah or the Religious Philosophy of the Hebrews*, XIX. Full text available at http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/rph/rph06.htm#page_xix

¹⁵⁰ Shaul Shaked, “Zoroastrianism and Judaism,” in *A Zoroastrian Tapestry. Art, Religion and Culture*, Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Panthakey Mistree, eds., (Mumbai: Mapin Publishing, 2002), 203.

up some particular conclusions based upon the deeper inspection of some selected texts from both traditions; the statements discussed above can be considered as some preliminary assumptions for such a quest.

The study of Zoroastrianism and Judaism interaction anticipates more or less equal knowledge of both religious traditions in order to examine one-sided or mutual influences.

In brief, the Sassanid period (224-651 CE), bearing the very essence of the Persian national identity, is specifically significant for the study of both Zoroastrianism and Islam as well¹⁵¹. Even Muslims favored Persian texts (so-called Iranophiles) of earlier Sassanid period; they translated and transmitted them directly to Arabic¹⁵². As it appears from studies, most active in transmitting Persian science to the West were not Persians themselves but rather Christians (Christian Syrians as intermediary transmitters). Persian story literature was also highly respected; and the *Thousand and One Nights (Hazar Afsan)* is a core source for migratory motives into the West from tales of Sasanian literature origin (e.g., Pahlavi literature). All in all, the above means that in terms of Sassanid period Zoroastrian developments cannot be considered apart from neighbouring Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities.

1.2. Judeo-Persian studies

Strangely enough, the Judeo-Persian literature is as well considered to be the most neglected area of both Jewish and Iranian studies and therefore many recorded texts remain mostly unexplored¹⁵³. One of the most important Judeo-Persian phenomenon studied more or less extensively nowadays is Karaism (Jewish heterodox movement emanating from Iranian Jewish community since the times of Muslim conquest); a notable number of its texts persisted in the Cairo Genizah in Judeo-Persian, between the 9th to 14th centuries¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵¹ Konstanty Aleksandrovich Inostrantsev, *Iranian Influence on Moslem Literature*, Part I, trans. G. K. Nariman (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co, 1918). E-book, 2004 taken from: <http://www.scribd.com/>

¹⁵² Konstanty Aleksandrovich Inostrantsev, *Iranian Influence on Moslem Literature*, op.cit.

¹⁵³ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, An Anthology of Judeo-Persian Literature, trans. Vera Basch Moreen, Yale Judaica Series, Vol.XXX (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

Jews of Iran wrote in Judeo-Persian (classical Persian with Hebrew letters) and their literary achievements reflected a colourful synthesis of both Persian and Jewish cultures. However, there is no clear direct proof that Jews used Pahlavi script within the Sasanian period, but yet we can consider Judeo-Persian a mixture of Hebrew with Aramaic elements (i.e., Jewish-Aramaic)¹⁵⁵. Generally speaking, Pahlavi phenomenon is interesting for the consideration because it bears elements of both Semitic and Indo-european languages, since Indo-european language uses Aramaic script. This is followed by the specific syncretism of Iranian mythology with Semitic elements of history and mythology (particularly Jewish) and the succeeding impact on Islamic civilization¹⁵⁶. We will be dealing more with Judeo-Persian literary phenomenon later in our thesis.

¹⁵⁵ Shaul Shaked, „Jewish and Christian Seals of the Sasanian period,” in *Institute of Asian and African Studies* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977), 24.

¹⁵⁶ Shaul Shaked, „Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia,” in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*. No.21 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 114-115.

V. Writing Down of Traditions.

1.1. Shift from Oral to Written Tradition?

By determining „Judaism” and „Jewish” we refer in general to Jewish midrashic (legendary) traditions with an addition of a few particular cases specified additionally to halakhic discourses (for example, on purity issues). As we saw, Medieval Jewish visionary journey (i.e., visionary midrash) was a representative of Jewish mystical narrative tradition as a later development of Pseudepigraphy which was produced not by normative rabbinic authorities, but rather by Jewish sectarians (apocalyptists) who circulated the issue amongst common folk masses. There is an enormous amount of other legendary traditions including similar travelling motifs which were transferred from Near Eastern religious lore into Medieval European.

Visionary Muslim religious legends on *Miraj* are available in various versions and multiple forms, extant in at least six variations in the form of *hadiths* or traditions of the Prophet (before and after the 9th century)¹⁵⁷. Prof. Miguel Asin Palacios, a Spanish scholar and a Roman Catholic priest, explains that these numerous legends on *Miraj* were finally crystallised in one definite form by Muslim theologians and interpreters of the Scriptures, and the later were either commentaries of it, allegorico-mystical adaptations and literary imitations of it¹⁵⁸. He admits that this may have been influenced by many similar circulating tales of Jewish, Persian and Christian origin¹⁵⁹. He is referring to Pseudepigraphic Judeo-Christian ascensions of Moses, Enoch, Baruch and Isaiah as well as Persian Arda Viraf (AWN) and Christian *Visio Pauli* (the Apocalypse of Paul)¹⁶⁰.

We have already pointed earlier that any reasonable communication and further passing on of the tradition could happen at large in oral form. This concerns both Jewish, Zoroastrian and Islamic resources in use until religious texts became codified. This is especially true in case of travelling legends, as well as Zoroastrian *zand* and Islamic *hadith*.

¹⁵⁷ Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2002), 4.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶⁰ Miguel Asin, *op.cit.*, 75.

After the rise of Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism wrote down their oral traditions in the presence of the threat of conversion. A Nowadays well supported theory is that Iranian Zoroastrian ideas entered and settled through the agency of Jews living among Iranian culture (Iranian Jews). Later, they were transmitted verbally or in written westward to the other Jewish communities of the Mediterranean world through long-distance trading activities¹⁶¹. Prof. John Reeves points out that the decisive moments under hostile world powers following the late antiquity through the first half of the 7th century lead the Near Eastern apocalyptic writers of Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian context to reshape their core teachings „*from orality to textuality and from the spoken word to the immutable book*”. He defines this process as „*textualizing of authority*”¹⁶².

Prof. Shaked provides important notes on transmitting and receiving of Zoroastrian knowledge in the Sasanian period. First of all, holy scriptures of Zoroastrianism were hardly accessible to the wide audience of hearers and readers due to a whole range of set up restrictions (representing rigid model of Zoroastrianism – see discussion in Part II)¹⁶³. These restrictions concerned teaching which in general was instructed orally. The particular restriction concerning the teaching of the *Avesta* (and *Zand*) is expressed in a passage of *Dēnkard*: „*When one has to choice, one should not learn Avesta, Zand and other instruction (as required) for each profession from evil people; for that man’s education will be worse, and he himself will possess a more corrupt soul who learns Avesta, Zand, and other instruction (as required) for each profession from evil people. One should not teach Avesta and Zand to evil and heretical people, for sin becomes more current in the world (by him) who teaches Avesta and Zand to evil and heretical people*” (Dēnkard VI:27-28). Indeed, this better explains the notion of Zoroastrianism as „a good religion”. Shaked expresses his conviction of the spoken „scripture” existence within the Sasanian since it is quite problematic to certainly claim that written *Avesta* was available¹⁶⁴. Instruction and

¹⁶¹ Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*, 33-34.

¹⁶² John C. Reeves, ed. *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 5.

¹⁶³ Shaul Shaked, „The Traditional Commentary on the Avesta (Zand): Translation, Interpretation, Distortion?” in *Proceedings of the international conference „La Persia e L’Asia Centrale da Alessandro al X Secolo*”. Atti Dei Convegni Lincei, 127 (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1996), 642, 643.

¹⁶⁴ Shaul Shaked, op.cit., 643, 644.

transmission of this form of spoken „scripture” was done through oral teaching by memorization and repetition. It means that the „text” was not read, but instead recited from memory when handed down¹⁶⁵. Shaked goes even further to assume that most probably oral tradition continued alongside with the written text¹⁶⁶. This means that later interferences and amendments could occur to the written textual tradition during the process of transmission as it remained open until the Achaemenid period.

Although Achaemenid culture was literate to some extent, the religious tradition was still transmitted orally. Liturgical text was probably memorized by boys from priestly families at a very early age. Some of these boys then continued the advanced religious studies, probably including exegesis and other skills necessary to interpret the religion. When the comprehension of Avestan became so weak that measures were needed to prevent a complete perceptual loss of the textual tradition, priests solved the problem by devising a system of word-for-word translation which was simple enough to be memorized along with the Avestan original¹⁶⁷.

Another complicated aspect of the Sasanian period was that the majority of Zoroastrians were deprived of direct understanding of the holy text. Only a few people could understand it due to the fact that the text was written in a dead language at the time¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶⁵ Shaul Shaked, op.cit., 643.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 644.

¹⁶⁷ Philip G. Kreyenbroek, “Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition,” in *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, Abbas Amanat, and Magnus Bernhardsson, eds., (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2002), 41. Online text available at: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/latvia/Doc?id=10132942&ppg=41>

¹⁶⁸ Shaul Shaked, „The Traditional Commentary on the Avesta (Zand)”, 644-645.

Part I.

1. Survey of Jewish concepts of afterlife before and after the destruction of the Second Temple.

1.1. Destruction of the Second Temple and its consequences

Before we revise in detail the concepts of afterlife in respective Medieval sources, we need to consider in brief the earlier developments that took place within Jewish tradition („developments within”).

The very period happened to be crucial for the whole further history of Jewish people. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its Second Temple (*Beth haMikdash*) in 70 CE marked the end of the status of Jerusalem and the Temple location as the exclusive symbol of the unity of Judaism¹⁶⁹. As the Jewish religious and ethnic identity focused entirely on the Temple, its loss caused a considerable calamity of confusion and uncertainty about the future of the whole nation. While the Temple and the holy city lay in ruins, there is a problem of understanding what the term “Jew” is to mean¹⁷⁰. As to author of 2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch), the destruction of the Temple is equal to the loss of Jerusalem and this should accordingly mean the end of the world, as the temple was conceived as the center of the earth in the ancient Near East¹⁷¹.

Due to these events of a catastrophic character, the apocalyptic-eschatological thinking became popular in the literature of the period, especially in Jewish apocalyptic writings.

¹⁶⁹ Arnaldo Momigliano, “Religion in Athens, Rome and Jerusalem in the First Century BC. Approaches to Ancient Judaism,” in *Studies in Judaism and its Greco-Roman Context*. Vol.5. (Atlanta: 1985), 14.

¹⁷⁰ During the Greek age the term “Jew” was assigned only to those living around Jerusalem Temple. See Elias Bickerman, *The Historical Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism*. Article is taken from book Finkelstein, L., ed. “The Jews. Their History, Culture, and Religion”. 3rd edition. Vol.I. The Jewish Publication Society of America. 1966. p.92.

¹⁷¹ F.J.Murphy, “The Temple in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106/4 (New York/London: 1987), 674.

This is clearly known that the tendency took a shape of greater individualisation in thought of the exilic and post-exilic periods¹⁷².

The eschatological conceptions of afterlife were developed and became more elaborated under the influence of these tendencies.

Archaeological excavations provide sufficient evidence of Jewish tombs from the Second Temple period, and scholars assume that individual burials show a reasonable transformation in burial praxis in comparison to common family tombs (*kever avot*) tradition of biblical period. This fact is directly related to a tendency of the growth of an individual role in the surrounding society and to a Jewish belief in individual resurrection of the body¹⁷³. In the 6th century CE, Jews began to perceive the second burial, a custom to replace bones following decomposition to ossuaries as a certain way to expiate their sins¹⁷⁴.

1.2. Transformations in Jewish thinking on afterlife.

As we saw, after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, important crucial transformations took place within Jewish tradition. We can discern a notable shift from “the present world” (*olam hazeh*) to “the world to come” (*olam habah*) including matters of all otherworldly things.

The opinion widely accepted amongst scholars is that a certain belief in future life became a dominant factor in Judaism by the time of the Second Temple period¹⁷⁵. As Bailey stated, the distinction between “this age” and the “age-to-come” is fundamental in the thinking of Judaism¹⁷⁶. To speak in eschatological terms, it is possible to discern a certain notable shift, from “the present world” to “the world-to-come” in the course of thinking of this period and specifically in the texts of Pseudepigrapha. The destruction and *absence*

¹⁷² H.B. Kuhn, “The Angelology of the Non-Canonical Jewish Apocalypses,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol.69 (New York/London: Ktav pub, 1948), 219.

¹⁷³ The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol.1, (Atlanta: Doubleday, 1992), 793.

¹⁷⁴ The Anchor Bible Dictionary, op.cit., 793.

¹⁷⁵ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Guide to Understanding the Bible the Development of Ideas Within the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 276.

¹⁷⁶ Bailey J.W. “The Temporary Messianic Reign in the Literature of Early Judaism”. *JBL*. Vol.53. (New York-London: 1934), 170.

(distinction by the author himself – V.A.) of the Temple causes the author of 2 Baruch to focus on the heavenly world and to deemphasize the rebuilding of the Temple¹⁷⁷. Jacob Neusner writes, “*When the apocalyptic visionaries looked back-ward upon the ruins, they saw a tragic vision, so they emphasized future..*”¹⁷⁸. There were several reactions or responses in regard to the destruction of the Second Temple. Solutions proposed by religious groups and movements varied. According to the Temple Scroll of the Qumran community, God will build a second eschatological temple. After destruction of the Second Temple, there was a notable growth of speculation about the heavenly Temple and the heavenly Jerusalem. Within biblical times and in the context of ancient Near Eastern tradition, each temple had its heavenly prototype, though when the central Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, the notion of the heavenly Temple and the heavenly Jerusalem to replace the earthly ones at the end of days became stronger. Thus Baruch (see 2 Bar. Ch.21-26) uses the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem to handle the problem of destruction.

1.2.1. Biblical concept of Sheol transformed.

Major Jewish concepts of afterlife undergoing transformation were that of biblical *Sheol*. Emerson Fosdick points out that a fate of an individual after death remained unclear by the time he became completely separated from the society as a whole; and Job is the first to inquire for God’s justice pertaining to afterlife¹⁷⁹. Fosdick investigated a certain development of the concept of *Sheol* in the Bible. According to him, it is possible to discern a growing necessity for “*transformation of Sheol*” which is closely related to the concept of justice of God. Originally *Sheol* was “*the land of oblivion*” (Ps. 88:12; cf.Ps.32:12). *Sheol* was a place where total equality reigned: rulers and captives, the small and the great were gathered at the same place without any distinction (see Job 3:14- 19), and in general the presence and justice of God in *Sheol* were questioned. According to Fosdick’s observations, it is possible to follow through the Bible and see how God gradually takes *Sheol* into His dominion. “Here”, he writes, “*a new theology is revealed, endless testimony to confidence in*

¹⁷⁷ F.J.Murphy, “The Temple in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch,” 676.

¹⁷⁸ Jacob Neusner, ed. “Early Rabbinic Judaism. Historical Studies in Religion, Literature and Art,” in *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Vol.XIII (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1975), 36.

¹⁷⁹ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 265, 266.

universal presence of God (...) in all spheres of the ancient Hebrew Universe (see Ps. 139:7-10).”¹⁸⁰. Besides this belief, there is a hope that the *Sheol* is not the final abode for the dead; out of the land of darkness and oblivion it becomes an ethically significant place where everybody is rewarded instead of the previous idea of equality.

In comparison to the biblical concept of *Sheol* Pseudepigraphic Enochic, *Sheol* was divided into four separate compartments two each for the wicked and the righteous (1 Enoch 22:1-14); surprisingly the Paradise or the division containing the souls of the righteous being a different division in the whole body of *Sheol*. Enoch describes *Sheol* thus: “*And there was in it four hollow places, deep and wide and very smooth*” (v.2). Souls of the dead are kept here till the Final Judgement (v.4). According to Charles note, the difference between this conception of *Sheol* and the that of biblical one is connected with its location in the far east as in the Babylonian and Greek traditions, yet the biblical Hebrews believed it was located in the underworld, beneath the earth¹⁸¹. According to John Collins, the main significance of Enochic description of *Sheol* is that it “*shows distinctions between the fate of the righteous and of sinners, in a manner not attested in earlier Jewish tradition*”¹⁸².

1.2.2. Gehenna.

We know a certain prehistory of the term *Gehenna*. In the Bible, common people were buried in a burial ground in the Valley of Hinnom (*Ge Hinnom*) outside the gates of Jerusalem (see II Kgs. 23:6; Jer. 26:23). Here the dead without special social status were thrown in a common ditch¹⁸³, and here the ashes of idols and corpses of murdered evildoers were thrown (II Kgs. 23:6; Jer. 22:19; 26:23) too. Following the reforms of Josijah, the Valley of Hinnom became a dreadful place for Jews as it was used as a dump where everything disgusting and unclean was thrown out; then finally talmudic theology identified the place with a symbolic entrance to *Gehenna*¹⁸⁴. According to Rabbinic opinion *Gehinnom* is the place of punishment where the wicked are consigned to go after being resurrected and

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 264.

¹⁸¹ Robert Henry Charles, ed. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, Vol. 2. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 202.

¹⁸² John Collins, “The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature,” 122.

¹⁸³ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel – its Life and Institutions* (London: McGraw Hill, 1961), 58.

¹⁸⁴ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 282.

judged following the Days of the Messiah, at the “Future Time” (*atid lavo*)¹⁸⁵. In the Book of Enoch, rejected by the Rabbis, *Gehenna* is definitely conceived as the final and not the immediate abode of apostates (see I Enoch 27:1,2; 90:26, 27), while in later Pseudepigraphal writings *Gehenna* is generally perceived as the final place of punishment for all the wicked (Assumption of Moses 10:10; 4 Ezra 7:36)¹⁸⁶. In Rabbinic literature, *Gehinnom* is prescribed to heretics, too (Avodah Zarah 17a). We will see the transformations and developments in the concept of *Gehenna* in the Jewish Medieval midrashic texts.

1.3. Rabbis and their opponents on afterlife.

Within this period, rabbinic authorities distanced themselves from apocalyptic lore through a large scale discussion and defined the categories of various *minim* or heretics.

It is obvious that the Rabbis touched and shaped the matters of the world-to-come (*olam habah*) largely while standing in harsh opposition to different heretic movements of their time. We know that the opponents of the Rabbis were traditionally called *minim* (“sectarians” or “heretics”) and this designation was possibly used to refer to the variety of Jewish sectarian groups, such as the Essenes, Samaritans, Sadducees, gnostics, Judeo-Christians and many others¹⁸⁷.

The fact is that so-called Pseudepigraphal Writings are designated by the Sages as “external books” (*sfarim hahitzonim* in the sense of “extracanonial” books) and they are strongly forbidden in the words of Rabbi Akiva in Mishna, “*He who reads in the external books has no share in the world-to-come*” (Sanhedrin 10:1). The term *hitzonim* clearly has the connotation of heresy; another Mishnaic passage (Meg. IV, 8) holds a reference to *hitzoniut*, understood here as heresy or sectarianism, i.e., “*those who follow their own way and not the ways of the Rabbis*” (Rashi’s commentary on Mishnah Megillah IV, 8). The word “external” or “outside” should have implied also the definite meaning of all “outside the

¹⁸⁵ However it should be noted that this is the opinion of the Rabbis who teach that the individual is not judged immediately after his death (i.e., individual eschatology), but sleeps in his grave or Sheol until the resurrection of all (i.e., universal eschatology).

¹⁸⁶ These assumptions are based on fundamental investigation by Robert Henry Charles:

Robert Henry Charles, *A Critical History*, 244, 358.

¹⁸⁷ Robert Travers Herford, *Talmud and Apocrypha. A Comparative Study of the Jewish Ethical Teaching in the Rabbinical and Non-rabbinical Sources in the Early Centuries* (New York: Ktav Pub Inc., 1971), 195.

canon” books which were considered heretical and were not recognized as Holy Scripture¹⁸⁸. No doubt, Pseudepigraphal Writings are real “*re-writings*” of biblical texts” (italics by the author himself – V.A.) or contain exegetical expansions of them¹⁸⁹ and thus one of the reasons for the prohibition of reading these books would have been *halakhic*: even the most extensive quotations from Scripture lose their holy quality if inserted in any heretical writing or even a prayer book¹⁹⁰. As far as we know, almost all the Scripture was considered canonical by the moment of the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE)¹⁹¹; afterwards there was no suggestion of reopening the Canon¹⁹². As George Macrae outlines in his Foreword to Professor James Charlesworth major work “The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha”, the question of the canonical status of the Pseudepigrapha in early Church was different in comparison to the one in the synagogue since in Christianity it persisted for a longer period, while rabbinic decision was made clearly against Pseudepigrapha¹⁹³. It is natural, that the books that appeared after the destruction of the Temple and the making of the Canon of the Hebrew Scriptures, were less worth of attention than the authoritative ones: they were not rewritten and not studied and finally their original texts in Hebrew were totally forgotten and lost¹⁹⁴.

The second and the most important reason for the Rabbinic prohibition of the Pseudepigrapha was due to its remarkable apocalyptic-eschatological character. It was stated that the apocalyptic pseudepigraphous literature “*consists largely in re-reading previous biblical literature according to apocalyptic models and ideas*” (John Collins)¹⁹⁵. At the same time, the Rabbis were mostly concerned with the study and interpretation of Law, essential for the present life on earth (*olam hazeh*); by every means they struggled to prevent any kind

¹⁸⁸ Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven. Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*. (Leiden: E.J.BRILL, 1997), 6-7.

¹⁸⁹ J.T.Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible. An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Leiden-New York-Köln: BRILL, 1998), 444.

¹⁹⁰ Louis Ginzberg, “Some Observations on the Attitude of the Synagogue towards the Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol.41 (New York-London: Ktav Pub, 1922), 123.

¹⁹¹ Лоуренс Шиффман, *От текста к традиции*, 60.

¹⁹² Robert Travers Herford, *Talmud and Apocrypha*, 197.

¹⁹³ J.H.Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol.1 (Atlanta: Doubleday & Company, 1983), IX.

¹⁹⁴ Авигдор Шинан, *Мир агадической литературы* (Иерусалим: Библиотека-Алия, 1990), 27.

¹⁹⁵ J.T.Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible*, 446.

of tendencies of alienation and other-worldliness. That was the strictly condemned and extreme apocalypticism and esoteric mysticism. The Rabbinic resistance to these eschatological speculations is formulated in Mishna Hagiga: “*Every one who tries to know the following four things, would be better if he had never come into this world: What is above [the heavens], what is beneath [the earth], what was before [the creation of the world], and what will be [after everything will be destroyed]*”¹⁹⁶. Even though the next world was held to be more important by the Rabbis, they saw the *olam hazeh* and the *olam habah* as mutually dependent and interlocked. In connection to the world-to-come, according to Rabbis there is an established opinion that “*all Israel has a share in the World to Come*” (Sanhedrin 10:1; Avot 1:1). However, yet three sorts of Israelites do not have a share in it: “*the one who says that the resurrection of the dead is a teaching that does not derive from the Torah; [the one who says that] the Torah is not from heaven; and the Epicurean*” (Sanhedrin 10:1).

As far as we know, the so-called Merkabah mysticism related to Pseudepigrapha literature was also put under question by the Rabbis due to a certain features of Gnosticism¹⁹⁷. The actual reason was that the mystical experiences included in the *Hekhalot* literature (8-10th centuries CE) and alike those of Pseudepigrapha were also deeply concerned with the concepts of angelology, demonology, apocalypticism and mysticism¹⁹⁸.

Still notwithstanding is the fact that Pseudepigrapha were not accepted by the rabbis; many of the stories and themes found in Pseudepigrapha do reappear in the Talmud and Midrash.

To shortly conclude the above, the early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature (or Pseudepigrapha) that came in sight as a radical response to the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.), expressed a remarkable shift from biblical to post-biblical thinking and included previous transformed and developed concepts of afterlife. Rabbinic opposition was mostly targeted against indirect influences: tendencies that arised due to Iranian wisdom and included the phenomena of gnostic and apocalyptic. Rabbinic thinking on afterlife was shaped while opposing these phenomena (i.e., Iranising trend) and thus took another direction than the former one.

¹⁹⁶ L. Wallach, “A Jewish Polemic Against Gnosticism,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol.65. (New York -London: New York, 1946), 396.

¹⁹⁷ Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 17.

¹⁹⁸ Лоуренс Шиффман, *От текста к традиции*, 251-252.

1.4. Babylonian Jewish diaspora and the shaping of the afterlife.

When did Jews reach an established a notion of afterlife?

Dr. Alexander Militarev observed a surprising issue amongst biblical Hebrews: a reflection on afterlife was not binding despite they obtained a sufficient knowledge and were involved in close interrelations within the environment where concepts on afterlife were developed. Thus, more extended and exposed or at least hidden polemics with pagans (*gojīm*) could follow¹⁹⁹. However, such reflection appeared in the post-biblical period only, as we have noted already.

It is clear, that during the post-exilic period, the old Hebraic conception of dark and pointless *Sheol* was gradually shaped into the idea of Heaven and Hell as separate places of post-mortem reward. In general, there are scholars who admitted Jewish theology had not developed a concept of afterlife, neither in terms of Satan, nor demonology until after residence in Babylonian exile. We can discern certain Zoroastrian elements already in the Hebrew Bible (the Book of Esther, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jesaiah, Job), followed by a rich Apocryphal (for example, Tobit) and Pseudepigraphal literature (for example, *Ascensio Isaiae*).

Biblical scholar Robinson Wheeler finds the “*first tentative demand for a life beyond death*” in the Book of Job²⁰⁰. Emerson Fosdick points out that Job is the first one to question a postmortem fate of an individual and righteousness in the afterlife. He calls it the necessity for “*transformation of Sheol*”²⁰¹.

A serious consideration of afterlife matters (inc. eschatology) by the Jews was begun rigorously only after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and in exile. Forced to face the utter calamity of destruction of a religious center, it led to the reconsideration of former religious values, including afterlife.

There is a well known trend in history of religions (especially in case of Christianity) to consider some concepts as shaped within a single tradition while being in opposition to the

¹⁹⁹ А.Ю. Милитарев, *Воплощенный миф* (Москва: Издательство «Наталис», 2003), 83.

²⁰⁰ Henry Robinson Wheeler, *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd, 1956), 94.

²⁰¹ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 265, 266.

other in terms of apologetic discourses. As we saw earlier, the Judaism case indeed was similar. For example, a separate study was carried out by Alan Segal on shaping Judaic concepts against gnostic dualism²⁰². Apparently, within the post-biblical period there is a line to be drawn between elites (rabbis, *magi*, etc.) and ordinary masses encouraged by religious syncretism and heretical movements. The practical applications (including purity issues) first of all were primary for normative Judaism and rabbis who followed the destruction of the Second Temple; another trend included diverse scattered speculative knowledge alongside with the tendency to interpolate foreign lore (Egyptian, Gnostic, babylonian, Zoroastrian, etc.) within a large spectrum of literary evidence. The above is characteristic of Pseudepigraphal sources. Afterlife and otherworldly journey issues used to be the general concerns of the later.

We came to the interesting conclusions on rabbinic attitudes towards Pseudepigraphal tradition. It demonstrated just a versatile and a complex type of Judaism in the age. In this case we mean the certain groups of intellectuals or lerned men productive in composing and handing down this kind of writings for further preservation, first of all, being interpretative in character in regards to previous Jewish tradition whether oral or written. Scholars of Jewish history in general agree that Judaism was changed after the Babylonian exile, indeed the process of change lasted for several centuries that followed after the destruction of the Second Temple. Nevertheless, this shift involved geographical consequences as Jews from Palestine were dispersed in Babylon.

When Jewish history considered in general, a very significant fact to be admitted: the Jewish diaspora had begun in Iran. Jews of Iran constitute one of the oldest Jewish diasporas in the world²⁰³. In course of time, the penetration of Judaism was distributed up to China: primarily due to the commercial activities of Jews from the Muslim world since many of them came from Iranian provinces²⁰⁴.

²⁰² Please, refer to his work for more details - Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven. Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: E.J. BRILL, 1977).

²⁰³ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 2.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

The traditional view is that Judaism as a religion was intensively constructed during the period of Babylonian exile and accordingly it encountered a strong Zoroastrian impact (until the rise of Islam in the 7th century) closely corresponding to the *Zeitgeist*²⁰⁵.

According to Neusner, there were no more significant events between the destruction of the Second Temple and the rise of Islam six centuries later of greater importance, as well as there is no deeper impact on the Babylonian Jewish consciousness than the rise of Sasanian power and the establishment of Zoroastrianism²⁰⁶.

As to Jewish knowledge about Zoroastrianism, Cohn supposes that during the Achaemenian times and for several following centuries Jews were already employed by wealthy Zoroastrians as scribes, business agents, servants or outdoor workers. Thus Jews learned their masters' religion and notions similarly to Hindus and Muslims working for Zoroastrians in modern India²⁰⁷. This particular Jewish knowledge of Zoroastrianism obtained through the communication with Zoroastrian priesthood could have spread easily from the diaspora to Palestine via pilgrimages to the Temple in even earlier period²⁰⁸.

It is interesting to note that Sassanian period coincides roughly with Talmudic period (220-589 CE). Jews lived in the Persian Babylonia under Persian rule and thus the interchange of religious ideas was unavoidable. According to John Waterhouse, Jewish and Zoroastrian contacts in Persian Babylonia finally resulted in "*a richer legacy of faith for both religions*"²⁰⁹.

Following the 2nd Babylonian Exile, a new hope for the afterlife was revealed in Jewish scriptures holding a doctrine of resurrection and individual judgement. According to scholars, this may be a reasonable debt to Persian (e.g., Zoroastrian) thought, at least in regard to imagery.

Paradoxically, even the Pharisees in the New Testament times since the Exile in Babylon were a religious group linked directly to the Persian tradition emerging later into

²⁰⁵ Л.С.Васильев, *История Религий Востока* (Москва: «Вышшая школа», 1988), See also Шантепи де ля Соссей, *Иллюстрированная История Религий* (Москва: Российский Фонд мира, 1992), 324. Александр Мень, *История Религии. Том 5* (Москва: Издательство Советско-Британского совместного предприятия «СЛОВО», 1992), 221.

²⁰⁶ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism in Talmudic Babylonia* (London: University Press of America, 1986), 26.

²⁰⁷ Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, 223.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

²⁰⁹ John Waterhouse, *Zoroastrianism* (San Diego, California: The Book Tree, 2006), 125.

normative Rabbinic Judaism. The Pharisees (Hebrew *perushim*; from *parush*, “separated”), a leading faction during the time when Jesus preached, were Jews who had returned from Babylonian exile and were acquainted with Persian²¹⁰ ideas such as the belief in good and evil spirits and angels, resurrection of the body, reward in afterlife and the coming of the Messiah (unlike the Sadducees, a Hellenized Jewish faction that rejected these ideas). Some scholars, upon a strong conviction of their Zoroastrian background, had referred to the Pharisees as “Farsis” or “Persians”²¹¹.

They had attained an authoritative status in emerging Jewish tradition and became the founders of Rabbinic Judaism that followed the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.). Later these very mainstream rabbis who produced Talmud and Midrash opposed so-called apocalyptic Pharisees among various sectarian groups²¹², and the Book of Daniel became the only one accepted into the Canon²¹³.

²¹⁰ M. Magee links Pharisees directly to the Persian tradition having an etymological connection - Pharisee, Parsee, Parsi - M. D. Magee, *Persia and Creation of Judaism*. Book 2. How Persia Created Judaism. Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism and Christianity. Part I. See http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/non-iranian/Judaism/Persian_Judaism/Persia_created_judaism.htm // see also L.G. Taivans, *Teoloģijas vēsture I*. Pirmkristīgo laikmets. A.D. 1-313 (Rīga: “Ceļš”, LU Teoloģijas fakultātes izdevniecība, 1995), 26-27.

²¹¹ Daryoush Jahanian, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine and Biblical Connections* (Kansas: D. Jahanian, 1997), 117. Besides, there is an interesting fact that Iranian Christians were referred in Chinese sources as the bearers of “the Persian religion” (Richard Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble*, 79.). And Iranian Jews are called “Persians” (Heb. *Parsim*) in modern Israel.

²¹² More on this see my earlier article Valts Apinis, “The Attitude of the Rabbinic Tradition towards the Pseudepigraphal Writings concerning the Afterlife,” in *Proceedings of the 9th Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference on Jewish Studies* (Moscow: SEFER, 2002).

²¹³ Louis Ginzberg, “Some Observations on the Attitude of the Synagogue towards the Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol.41 (New York-London: The Society of Biblical Literature, 1922), 131, 132.

2. Early forms of post-biblical visionarism and Medieval *tours of hell*

2.1. *Visionarism in Pseudepigraphic perspective*

We have made already a short excursus into visionary genre in the Introduction. Before dealing with specifics of Medieval Jewish visionary Midrashim in particular, we should consider other-worldly journey used to be very popular first in Pseudepigrapha²¹⁴. Texts tell about a journey of a God elected hero who is guided by a heavenly being on a tour to both heavens and hell.

The most famous journey is probably the one described in the books of Enoch (1 Enoch, Chapters 17-36; 2 Enoch Chapters 3-22). Gen.5:22, 24 says twice that Enoch „walked with God”, and „then he was no more, because God took him away”. We can only think of the volume of presumable literary inspiration left by this particular mysterious biblical sentence when it was extended into whole Enochic pseudepigraphic tradition. The cycle of Enochic books is dated as the oldest within Jewish extracanonical literature (3.Cent. BCE.), and is considered as concurrent to prophecies of Daniel and those produced by Qumran community²¹⁵.

There are other accounts of similar journeys in Pseudepigrapha texts as well, i.e. the Apocalypse of Baruch (Chapter 2-17), the Ascension of Isaiah (Chapter 6-11), the Apocalypse of Abraham (Chapter 15, 18-25), Testament of Abraham (Chapter 10-15) as well as in the Apocalypse of Ezra (4:5-5:6; 5:20-28), and Testament of Levi (Chapter 2-5).

Princeton University scholar Martha Himmelfarb had researched a transmission of “tours of hell”²¹⁶ from the Second Temple period into the Middle Ages and is convinced that,

²¹⁴ Traditionally, under term Pseudepigrapha (from Greek, *pseudo* + *epigrafos* – „things falsely ascribed”) stands an enormous number of anonymous Jewish and Christian writings, dated broadly between 200 BCE. and 200 CE. which are ascribed to famous Biblical figures. These texts have reached us mostly through transmission in different languages of Eastern Church.

²¹⁵ Alan Segal, *Life After Death*, 275.

²¹⁶ A special terminus technicus invented by Himmelfarb to designate portions of pseudepigraphic texts describing journeys to hell of a God elected hero (most often bearing biblical names) accompanied by a heavenly being. “Ascent to heaven” is another term used by the scholar.

for example, Dante Alighieri was drawing material from this tradition for his *Divina Comedia*, the fact that is partially ignored by dantologists²¹⁷.

According to Himmelfarb, before the above motives reached Dante's literary laboratory, they were preserved in the Middle Ages through pseudepigraphic works. The process of this kind should be studied carefully²¹⁸. A study of such textual transmission in pseudepigraphic tradition could lead to the interesting innovative conclusions.

The earliest extant text to comprise the *tour of hell* is in the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch, 3rd Cent B.C.E.). Later on we will show that it bears elements similar to the ones disclosed in Zoroastrian AWN.

Milik thinks that 1 Enoch and especially the Astronomical Book bear archaic literary and scientific features that link it to the ancient Babylonian (Sumerian) literature; Enoch Chapter 77 certainly has its beginning in the Mesopotamian centres of scholarship²¹⁹.

M. Himmelfarb emphasizes that there are two types of ascent to heavens – one describes a journey as a process of ascent from one heavenly sphere to another (for example, 2 Enoch), while other texts describe the hero's travels on a single plane (the Book of Watchers and the Parables of Enoch from 1 Enoch)²²⁰. She also concludes that a case when the hero ascends directly to the seventh heaven without stopping at the lower levels is permissible (the Apocalypse of Abraham shall be mentioned)²²¹. In addition, let us comment that the issues of heavenly ascent as a part of otherworldly journey and the graduation of the heavenly spheres is typical both in Pseudepigrapha and the Judeo-Persian Midrash on the Ascension of Moses and Dante's Divine Comedy. Enoch is taken up by angels to seven heavens (2 Enoch Ch. 3-20). The same conception of seven heavens appears in The Ascension of Isaiah (4:4-5; 9:1-11:40). In Midrash on the Ascension of Moses, angel Metatron takes Moses on a tour to nine heavenly spheres.

In this respect, Pseudepigrapha (Second Temple apocalyptic literature) influenced by Zoroastrian eschatological notions (Mary Boyce, Shaul Shaked) in terms of tours of hell is

²¹⁷ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 1, 38.

²¹⁸ Martha Himmelfarb, *op.cit.*, 38.

²¹⁹ Florentino García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (Leiden-New York-Köln: E.J.BRILL, 1992), 61.

²²⁰ Martha Himmelfarb, „Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual*. Vol.51 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Annual, 1988), 78.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

seen as a predecessor of Medieval Jewish visionary midrash (both of these rabbinically opposed).

2.2. Tours of hell and some specifics of Medieval Jewish visionary midrashim

The just revisited Jewish Pseudepigrapha of late antiquity and visionary Midrash of early Medieval period (sources for thesis demonstration will be differentiated later) have many features and motifs in common. Several links yet need to be further established. As to the afterlife itself, specific visionary genre texts of *tours of hell* need to be considered in detail. Himmelfarb's earlier exclusive work is one of the first of preliminary studies that perfectly considers the linking and reconstructing transmissions of Pseudepigraphal narratives; however it doesn't go beyond these. In total, 17 tours of hell descriptions of Jewish and Christian origin are explored, yet there is a lack in terms of referring to Iranian sources. A link is to be established between sin punishments and their specific details in tours and Zoroastrian earlier parallels. Specific details in hell punishments, hanging punishments, *demonstrative explanations* and torturing creatures shall be included, either.

French-born historian Jacques Le Goff argues that it is possible to establish and demonstrate a direct historical link in terms of underworld concepts between texts of Babylonian and Judeo-Christian traditions²²².

Medieval Jewish midrash had obviously adapted some elements of Zoroastrian tours of hell (AWN text mostly) embedded into Jewish patterns of thinking on afterlife. The most significant example of such transformation is found in *Gedulat Moshe* (dated variously, the earliest date is the first half of the 13th century). This can be proved by a closer comparative analysis of selected texts (see Tables 1, 9, 11, 12). According to Paul Raphael, Jewish midrash received more elaborated form through the 10th – 14th centuries, following the period of the Geonim in Babylonia²²³.

Michael Stone is convinced that a closer examination to be provided upon Medieval Jewish tradition in order to distinguish between specific contributions within the material²²⁴.

²²² Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 25.

²²³ Simcha P. Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 163.

²²⁴ Michael Stone, *Scriptures, Sects and Visions*, 110-111.

In this regard, we may refer to the late Medieval *Hekhalot* literature (8-10th Centuries C.E.). As far as we are concerned, the so-called *Merkabah* mysticism, a typical example of the literature of this kind was also questioned by the Rabbis due to a certain features of Gnosticism²²⁵. The point is that mystical experiences included in the *Hekhalot* literature alike those of Pseudepigrapha were also deeply concerned with the concepts of angelology, demonology, apocalypticism and mysticism²²⁶. The famous specialist on Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem is fully convinced that many pseudepigraphal and apocalyptic texts similar to Ethiopian Book of Enoch and IV Ezra contain the elements of Jewish mysticism and show the evident link to the later *Merkabah* mysticism²²⁷. The relationship between the pseudepigraphal apocalypses and the heikhalot texts was recently demonstrated by Himmelfarb. She tries to make a comparison in regards to the heavenly ascents and encourages carrying on an investigation on separate texts²²⁸. We should point out that these concepts were developed a lot in Zohar (in general, the concepts of *Gehinnom* and Garden of Eden).

Oftentimes recensions of Pseudepigraphic works survive in several versions and linguistic traditions, attesting a lively scribal interest in the transmission and even embellishment of received wisdom (i.e., the two distinct Old Slavonic versions of 2 Enoch; the numerous oriental versions of 4 Ezra; Syriac and Arabic versions of 2 Apocalypse of Baruch).

Syriac literature is especially rich in terms of Jewish pseudepigraphical heritage²²⁹ due to the presence of Jewish communities in Syria and Mesopotamia throughout the late antique and Islamic periods.

There were different ways of reading and interpreting the scriptural substrate shared by Jews, Christians, gnostics, and Muslims; there is a substantial evidence of the transmission of narrative motifs, exegetical traditions, and even entire works across formal religious boundaries. The increase of interest in the “writings”

²²⁵ Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 17.

²²⁶ Лоуренс Шиффман, *От текста к традиции*, 251-252.

²²⁷ Гершом Шолем, *Основные течения в еврейской мистике* (Иерусалим: издательство «Библиотека-Алия», 1993), 68-69.

²²⁸ Martha Himmelfarb, „Heavenly Ascent,” 99.

²²⁹ An excellent guide to this material is supplied by D. Bundy, “Pseudepigrapha in Syriac Literature,” in *Society of Biblical Literature*, 1991 Seminar Papers (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 745-65.

emanating from a diverse array of Near Eastern religions and sects has undergone a long way toward: it explains the remarkable preservation and eventual supplementation and expansion of Second Temple era Jewish writings in the Middle Ages. Albeck, Himmelfarb, and Stone investigated ancient Pseudepigraphical literature and discovered some type of undoubted literary transmission. This process involves textual movement from eastern to western sites of intellectual activity in general, perhaps via Byzantine Italy²³⁰ or North Africa and Andalusia to Provence. We should not underestimate the potential role of Arabophone literature, subsequently translated into Hebrew in this connection; the *qisas al-anbiya* (“tales of the prophets”) collections were extremely popular and constituted a rich depository of all sorts of curious lore, some of which is indebted to Jewish pseudepigraphical legend²³¹.

²³⁰ Martha Himmelfarb, “R. Moses the Preacher and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 73.-77.

²³¹ Haim Schwarzbaum, *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk Literature* (Waldorf-Hessen: Verlag für Orientkunde Dr. H. Vordran, 1982), 50-75.

3. Development of Eschatological systems within Jewish and Zoroastrian traditions.

A general survey.

In order to clarify certain aspects of Jewish-Zoroastrian encounter and to reach our thesis argument including certain conclusions at the end of the study we need to proceed in the evaluation of both religious traditions in a perspective of afterlife concepts as a part of eschatology. In this regard, as already stated, we need to take into account the transmission of some related concepts including those of Islamic and Christian traditions (both in the East and West). This is important since we are addressing a period and region that used to be the crossroad of many civilizations and significant religious traditions.

Case of Zoroastrian and Jewish interaction anticipates more or less equal knowledge about both religious traditions.

A systematic comparison of Zoroastrian and Jewish eschatological systems (literature of post-rabbinic apocalyptists) includes a time span roughly from the 4-10 centuries and up till the 14th century CE; however, the older layers comprising very similar or identical concepts are important, too, i.e. the pseudepigraphical Book of Enoch (middle of the 2nd cent. BCE.). The Book of Enoch comprises many Iranian elements (introducing evil powers coming into the world). Indeed the Book of Ezekiel was primarily composed under the spirit of Babylonian exile²³². According to several scholars, the earliest pieces of Enoch's vision tour are of Mesopotamian origin, and were composed out of tradition upon a close association within local Jewish diaspora community, namely, the Mesopotamian Jewish tradition²³³.

It has been pointed out that Iranian influence on Judaic concepts became most evident already during the Hellenistic period in Greek-ruled Palestine, yet not from the very Persian period (6th - 4th centuries BCE)²³⁴.

²³² See extended article on this: James Russel, „Ezekiel and Iran,” in: *Armenian and Iranian Studies*, ed. James Robert Russel, Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 899.-907.

²³³ Ida Fröhlich, *Time and Times and Half a Time. Historical Consciousness in the Jewish Literature of the Persian and Hellenistic Eras* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 52.

²³⁴ Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*, 33.

There are three themes in eschatology that dominated texts in both Zoroastrian and Jewish traditions: individual eschatology (life after death – individual judgement and reward – paradise and hell); universal eschatology (resurrection or *ristaxīz* (Pers.), universal judgement, the new world); and apocalypse (end of the world and the coming of Saviour/Messiah) .

AWN as a core textual source for demonstration is primarily concerned with the individual eschatology, while Jewish apocalyptic literature most often represents distinctive elements of collective („universal”) eschatology. The common feature of both texts’ groups is their belonging to a visionary genre discussed earlier, as they all describe an otherworldly journey of a travelling God elected hero accompanied by a divine guide.

Zoroastrianism develops its eschatological system during the Sasanian period around the 9th Cent. At this time, Jewish and Zoroastrian traditions were relatively unstable in Babylonia and thus both groups decided to formulate and write down their traditions with the help of intellectuals²³⁵. Basic features of Zoroastrian eschatology are not of the later period, however belong to the oldest teachings of the system²³⁶. In general, most of Zoroastrian Pahlavi centuries old oral traditions were written down during the 9th and 10th centuries²³⁷. This time period includes the final elaboration of Zoroastrian eschatological system around the 9th century. Writing down the Zoroastrian text AWN upon oral tradition is usually dated by the Sasanian period of the 4th to 7th century CE, later dating is said to be around the 9th-10th centuries.

Scholars provide various external explanations of the appearance of eschatological concepts within Jewish tradition. We can assume, that the encounter with Zoroastrianism provided the necessary stimulus for further development of such ideas. Probably, Zoroastrian eschatological motives coincided or corresponded to the current mood and needs of Judaism; yet they were not in-depth developed further due to the certain, mostly rabbinic, opposition. Based on the above we can conclude that Judaism could have borrowed certain elements of Zoroastrian eschatology (as a part of wider eschatological system) to fit some of its needs. This is a version suggested by Professor Shaked. During my further research some particular

²³⁵ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Zoroastrianism*, 1.

²³⁶ George William Carter, *Zoroastrianism and Judaism* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1918), 100.

²³⁷ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Zoroastrianism*, Preface, IX.

conclusions may follow as we inspect and differentiate several outstanding texts of both traditions.

As to hypothetical influence upon Jewish apocalyptic tradition, John Collins notes that such features of apocalyptic genre in terms of periodization of history may be regarded not as a mere borrowing, but rather as adapted for the needs of Jewish monotheism. Finally, in case of an active religio-cultural exchange, „*Persian apocalypticism was thoroughly reconceived and integrated with other strands of thought*”²³⁸: the idea of adapting and transforming Zoroastrian ideas was also expressed by Shaul Shaked as we saw earlier. Although Collins points out that Persian apocalyptic parallels demonstrate more comprehensiveness in nature, he denies the idea of Babylonian or Persian material as an exclusive matrix for Jewish apocalypticism²³⁹. However he made no contribution to a more extensive study on this subject. As we saw, some scholars claimed the vice-versa direction of influence and put Jewish sources as primary versus secondary Zoroastrians.

Alger argues that there is no exact proof that Zoroastrians borrowed theological doctrines from Jews²⁴⁰ and besides there is no need in reconsidering Christian or Muslim ideas interpolated in ancient Zoroastrian Scriptures²⁴¹. The earliest evidence of Zoroastrian notion in biblical texts is noted in the book of Job which describes Satan (*Ahriman* is a prototype) as a prince in heaven before his fall²⁴². The author also refutes the theory of the adoption of doctrine of resurrection by Jews from Persians at an early date and not at much later time from Jews (or Christians) by Persians (*Avesta* does not mention resurrection in particular). There is a general agreement among those scholars who admit that Jewish theology had no Satan, no demonology and angelology and no specific apocalyptic-eschatological thinking prior to the residence in Babylonian exile.

It is interesting to note, that Zoroastrians very much likely perceived resurrection (*Dadestan i Denig* about bodily resurrection 16:7 – there is bodily resurrection at the end; the new body is termed *tan i pasīn*) as distinctively immaterial, while the Jews (Christians and

²³⁸ John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 33.

²³⁹ John Collins, op.cit., 33.

²⁴⁰ W.R. Alger, *The Destiny of the Soul. A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life* (Project Gutenberg, 2006) EBook No.19082 at www.gutenberg.org

²⁴¹ W.R. Alger, op.cit., www.gutenberg.org

²⁴² W.R. Alger, op.cit., www.gutenberg.org

Muslims as well) directed all their belief to the bodily restoration on earth. In Zoroastrian, the concept of the immaterial resurrection of the soul is favored. That is why there is a custom not to bury dead in earth or to burn them by fire to avoid the pollution. Otherwise, there would be an incompatibility. Dead body is perceived as corruptible and impure substance (but not live body like in Manicheism!) in Zoroastrianism, therefore it should be annihilated by creatures who are considered to impure themselves (dogs, vultures, beasts, bugs, demons, etc.) in order to make sure that no single part is left to contaminate the earth, water or fire. Interestingly enough, AWN in all cases mentions a soul of a sinner being punished in hell and refers to particular torments executed on the body. This concept is similar to the one St. Augustine mentions in his theological tractate *De Civitate Dei* ("City of God"), referring to a soul with a spiritual body to become a subject of various hell torments (to be given to the fire and not to burn, to be given to intense cold but not to perish, etc.); a body of a soul as indestructible substance²⁴³.

Finally, when Zoroastrian influence upon Jewish texts is demonstrated, the research requires a better knowledge of Zoroastrian sources and broader tradition in order to put the right arguments in task. Not only Zoroastrian AWN text will be discussed in detail, but other Zoroastrian texts on afterlife as well since eschatology, especially in terms of hell (cf. *Bundahishn*, *Dadestan i Denig*) is to be involved for the clarification of broader context of these concepts.

We will be dealing more in detail with the above issues in the section *Questions of „remote origin”*. *How is it possible to trace Zoroastrian origin to a non-Zoroastrian (Jewish, Christian, Muslim source)?*

²⁴³ Valts Apinis, *Eshatoloģija Augustīna darbā “Dieva pilsēta” (De Civitate Dei)*. Unpublished manuscript, (Riga: June 20, 1998), 12-15.

Major conclusions of *Part I*

Preliminary discussion in recent major secondary studies reveals that there is an expanding interest among scholars in various aspects of Zoroastrian interaction with other religious traditions and philosophies in late antiquity and during the Medieval period. The afterlife concept is one of the revisited. In the study of Zoroastrian-Jewish interaction, explored since the late 19th century, and largely affected by two World wars, the presence of motifs of surrounding religious traditions of Islam and Christianity origin should not be ignored. The present study is provided in a multidisciplinary perspective, referring to studies of linguists, historians, cultural historians, religious historians, philosophers, theologians, Orientalists, Arabists, Iranists, dantologists and heresiologists. Still, very few scholars were dealing with the issue of Jewish-Zoroastrian interaction on afterlife in regards to specific concepts within texts of Middle Ages.

The relevance of this topical study is attested by several scholars who point out the direction of gaps left unexplored in Zoroastrian-Jewish interaction, especially in the field of a possible transmission of similar motifs from biblical and Pseudepigraphic („developments within”) and Zoroastrian textual traditions („developments from foreign sources”, Zoroastrian *zand*) into Medieval lore (Muslim *hadith* and Christian alike). This concerns both oral and written traditions since the first half of the 7th century when the Near Eastern apocalyptic Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian writers had turned to the active „*textualizing of authority*” (terminology by John Reeves).

During the postconquest era of Arab invasion of Iran, the identification of this group with its predecessors of apocalyptic doomsday led to the revision of Zoroastrian concept of prophecy (established oracular tradition) in its apocalyptic form. Most of new apocalyptic prophecies were added to the lore from the 12th to the 14th centuries. Fears of Muslim dominance also gave rise to extensive Jewish messianism and Christian apocryphal tales.

The emergence of visionary genre as a stimulating and steady phenomenon demonstrates clear Babylonian magian origins that stretched from the ancient Near Eastern cuneiform texts up until late Medieval European folklore. In this respect, hellenized Jews are considered as an important part of a trade network that connected Iranian Jewish

communities to the eastern Mediterranean countries and thus acted as “*cultural filters transforming and transmitting Iranian stories and concepts*” (Richard Foltz). The art of interpreting dreams established a succeeding Jewish genre in the Babylonian diaspora drawing on rich local traditions.

In order to assess the extent of possible Zoroastrian influences, it is necessary to consider the religio-cultural system of the Israelites prior to their encounter with Iranians which is done through references on Jewish thinking in biblical and post-biblical period (Pseudepigrapha). Historically, there is a need to look at certain milestones, i.e. Judaism before and following Babylonian exile; Zoroastrianism before and after emergence of Islam, etc. The period that followed the destruction of the Second Temple (70.CE.) is the crucial date. Judaism was enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism (Mary Boyce). It has been suggested lately that even the book of Job came as a radical response to the destruction of the Temple. By tracing back to Zoroastrian eschatologies and their specific structure reflected in Pahlavi texts, it is possible to attain the clearer image of Judeo-Christian tradition (Shaul Shaked). Persian apocalypticism was thoroughly reconceived and some its features were absorbed so far as they fitted with Jewish strands of thought (John Collins).

And finally the concepts of afterlife were reconsidered during the Middle ages when these topics came to the fore once again.

As there is a lack of deeper study in secondary studies on hell tortures (topic of major importance in the Middle Ages) it awaits closer examination through the view of available textual evidence (partially in translations) including specific elements that appear, re-appearing or are omitted, aiming to develop further hypotheses in comparative religious approach. Manuscript based studies are a progressive approach to derive interesting conclusions. We will be analysing selected texts in a while.

Part II.

1. Jews and Zoroastrians in relation to “the other”. Evaluation of foreign relations.

1.1. Rigidity of Zoroastrian Tradition. Contacts with non-Zoroastrians, the others.

In this chapter, it is necessary to consider Zoroastrianism in relation or, more precisely, in confrontation to other religious traditions, especially Jewish. In general, Zoroastrianism has not been in favour of Judaism (argument against Jewish influence on Zoroastrianism), however there was an important scholarly debate that reflected completely opposite views.

Let us state an intriguing question: what is Zoroastrian concept of other surrounding religious traditions? What is its inner view of surrounding world realities? What is the Zoroastrian world model, and what is the evaluation of its preceding (previous) historical periods? Are there any differences in comparison to the Islamicized Iran?

This view of a “rigidity” (a closed up rather than open tradition) of Zoroastrianism is certainly not in favour of those scholars who tend to claim Jewish influence on Zoroastrianism. Dutch scholar Albert de Jong who is in favour of Jewish influence upon Zoroastrianism, is convinced there is a good number of examples of correlation and harmonization of both Zoroastrian and Jewish traditions (specifically, common fundamental religious concepts). Such approach leads to argue against rigid models within both religions²⁴⁴. He mentions “charitable” (meaning, favourable, open-ended attitudes) and “rigid” views of religions during the Sasanian and later Medieval period when many earlier traditions were reconsidered, evaluated and reshaped from Zoroastrian perspective towards their own (re-evaluation) and other non-Zoroastrian religions. First of all, the former view is in favour of common fundamental and connecting aspects of human race, culture and civilization dealing with piety and righteousness issues. The later view denies the first and

²⁴⁴ Albert de Jong, “Zoroastrian Ideas about the Time before Zaratustra,” in *Genesis and Regeneration. Essays on Conceptions of Origins*, ed. S.Shaked (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2005), 206.

states in a rigid way that only Zoroastrian, a follower of “a good religion”, is a good person²⁴⁵. Both aspects are presented specifically in polemics reflected in the *Bundahišn* and the *Dēnkard* texts. De Jong speculates about the possible origins of these two approaches mentioned above: the rigid view emerged in the context of confronting with similar claims of other religions in Iran (Manichaeism, Christianity, Islam), while the charitable view appeared in the absence of these or when strong tensions were not in effect²⁴⁶. The rigidity of Zoroastrian views has developed especially following the Arab conquest of Iran²⁴⁷. For example, specific Zoroastrian rigidity of orthodoxy and ruling elites contributed to penetration of Christianity within the Sasanian empire and into Central Asia²⁴⁸. It is clear that Zoroastrian tradition was strong in condemning heretics (Jews, Christians, gnostics, zurvanites, Mazdakites, Manichaeans and other minor groups) in Sasanian times, when heresy was defined as unacceptable interpretations (*zands*) of the holy text (*zandīg*), rendered by orthodoxy as a product of „mixed doctrine” (distorted) opposite to the established doctrines of the „good religion”²⁴⁹. This is actually a clear indication of the incredibility of infiltration of foreign ideas into Zoroastrian religion. At the same time, the Zoroastrian religion was varied a lot and was never unified in the Sasanian period; no matter how much the Sasanian state and church and our Middle Persian sources try to portray such a unity, the textual evidence as well as the evidence from the early Islamic period suggests the contrary²⁵⁰.

Shaul Shaked, an opponent of previous position and therefore an adherent of rigid view of late Zoroastrianism, gives a useful explanation in regard to religious varieties in medieval Iran, indeed in favour of Zoroastrian influence: *“If the religion transmitted to us in the literary canon of scripture and in the mediaeval Zoroastrian tradition is mainstream Zoroastrianism, it was certainly not the only form of religion, perhaps not even the most widespread one, in the Sasanian period. Popular Zoroastrianism was apparently more open to syncretistic relationship with the neighbouring religious cultures than was the official*

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 203.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 206.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 207.

²⁴⁸ Gene.R. Garthwaite, *The Persians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 112.

²⁴⁹ Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2008), 86., 90.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 96.

religion of Iran. The tendency to harmonize Iranian traditions with those of the Semitic world belongs, one may assume, to this layer of religion. Under the general term harmonization, it may be useful to distinguish two types, one consisting of a genuine fusion of conflicting traditions, and the other representing a process of translation"²⁵¹. This is so-called Shaked's paradigm which suggests the three-fold manifestation of Zoroastrian religion in the Sasanian period: 1) the official, state sanctioned religion; 2) the popular type of religion based upon magical practices, and 3) harmonization of common religious practices which shared aspects of both above patterns. This is to say, syncretism and harmonization inside tradition was most likely concerned with the popular version of Zoroastrianism bearing more elements of earlier mythology, rather than with the official one. Considering the above and in regard to our hypothesis respectfully, we may conclude that far more greater influence of Zoroastrianism was exercised on non-canonical trend within Judaism, and that the most influential ideas were flowing and flourishing in between popular trends of both Zoroastrian and Jewish traditions²⁵². It is hard to prove whether an official Zoroastrianism in Iran of the Sasanian period was in conflict with surrounding religious traditions, but we can be more confident of it being a part of an esoteric trend (as part of rigid view of Zoroastrianism). Once again, Shaked has convincing arguments at disposal. He has reconstructed an esoteric tendency among Zoroastrian circles which leads to a suggestion that "a good religion" has to be barred from the majority of the believers and confined to a restricted number of few selected people. One of the facts to support this position was that Pahlavi script was not accessible to most members of the Zoroastrian community, therefore only few were able to read and study religious texts²⁵³. Elsewhere Shaked offers three points that clearly state the rigidity of Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian period: 1) holy "scripture" was transmitted exclusively in an oral mode; 2) holy "scripture" was not supposed to be accessible to all; 3)

²⁵¹ Shaul Shaked, "First Man, First King. Notes on Semitic-Iranian Syncretism and Iranian Mythological Transformations," in *GILGUL. Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions* (Leiden-New York-Kopenhagen-Köln: E.J.BRILL, 1987), 252.

²⁵² This is true also about various Gnostic heresies and other modifications of Persian thought in the Orient and Medieval Europe.

²⁵³ Shaul Shaked, *Two Types of Esotericism*. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation. V. Band 1. Geheimnis und Öffentlichkeit (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1997), 228-229.

holy “scripture” was not comprehensible to most²⁵⁴. *Zand* is seen in this regard as the way to reopen the accessibility of holy “scripture” through interpretation²⁵⁵.

Vera Moreen acknowledges the same opinion and clarifies that Iranian Jews were more literate (attested by an interesting phenomenon of rich Judeo-Persian literature) than their non-Jewish neighbours, while the majority of the non-Jewish population of pre-Islamic Iran was illiterate. Before the rise of Islam in Iran, the knowledge of Pahlavi and the literacy in general was confined mostly to the upper elite classes such as priests, scribes, nobles and merchants²⁵⁶.

Judeo-Persian literature (legendary epics) of Iranian Jewish writers is defined by Moreen as a phenomenon “*of the confluence of two mighty literary and religious streams, the Jewish biblical and postbiblical heritage and the Persian (Muslim) literary legacy*”²⁵⁷. Later on we will be exploring in detail one of the texts of Judeo-Persian tradition that was preserved and anew translated: *The Ascension of Moses* (Hebrew ‘*Aliyat Moshe le-marom*). According to Moreen, it was popular amongst Iranian Jews as alternative rival for Muhammad’s ascension²⁵⁸. I should be more convinced that *the Assumption of Moses* is a successor of a much earlier pseudepigraphal tradition that began in the 1st century C.E. and extended till the early Middle Ages²⁵⁹.

It can be assumed, that at the level of folk superstitious, similar percepts were followed by neighbouring peoples of Iran (Christians, Jews), accordingly it is most possible that on level of cross-cultural interaction (through daily communication), magical beliefs existed until the rise of Islam in Iran as reduced and distorted forms of primary Zoroastrian teachings. Some of them have from Zoroastrian background and left particular footprints in Talmudic literature. We may refer to few examples in this regard. Isaiah Gafni mentions few interesting cases of Talmudic literature that appeared as a result of close interaction between Babylonian Jewish and local Iranian folk culture. In addition to mentioned already, the influences of cosmogony, dualistic views, concept of battle between two powers in this world

²⁵⁴ Shaul Shaked, „The Traditional Commentary on the Avesta (Zand)”, 645.

²⁵⁵ Shaul Shaked, op.cit., 645.

²⁵⁶ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther’s Garden*, 11.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 11-12.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.

²⁵⁹ More on possible relations among the apocalyptic texts of this kind please refer to Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 170.

and within man, some astrological and eschatological issues, superstitions in the field of demonology (as highly developed in Babylonia), etc., are the most favourite. Zoroastrians theory included an image of a hole army of demons called *daevas* (originally gods in Indo-Iranian tradition) and referred to their swarming multitude, also mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud. It also testifies the danger of even numbers use: this superstitious concept originates from Zoroastrian circles. Another superstitious custom is not to throw away cut-off nails („*the one who keeps them – is a righteous person, the one who burns them is a pious man, the one who throws them away is a sinner*”, Moed Katan 18a). There is also a custom that prohibits to drink water from open sheds, especially at night (or on special nights). In Zoroastrianism, the night is considered as a realm of demonic activity, therefore it is a sin to drink and eat at night. The system of struggle and protection against demons resulted in talismans and incantations both in Zoroastrian and Jewish circles²⁶⁰. We will refer to more of these as we proceed in details.

To summarise the aforesaid, the literacy of Iranian Jews (they were familiar with the great Persian classics) is another fact that favors Zoroastrian influence on Judaism; not to say it was forced upon Jews, however, they were eager to gain knowledge, and thus served as certain intermediaries who transmitted knowledge further within the heritage of textual sources (Judeo-Persian texts written in Persian with Hebrew script). As we mentioned earlier, this heritage and the particular comparative textual studies in the field of Irano-Judaica emerged only since the 19th century; accordingly one may attest a great probability of much more texts to be studied in detail, since many of them remain unexplored in general or scarcely explored so far; for example, the impact of Iranians on the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism²⁶¹.

These are some generalizations, yet vitally necessary to proceed with our specific hypothesis.

What can we say in respect of conversion? Were there any cases of it? What is to be done to a Zoroastrian who converts to a different religious tradition?

De Jong, favoring the open-ended model of Zoroastrian community, points out, that conversions to Zoroastrianism during Sasanian period were scarce amongst neighbouring

²⁶⁰ Исаия Гафни, *Евреи Вавилонии в талмудическую эпоху*, перевод с иврита М.Навона и Ю.Шлайфмана (Москва-Иерусалим: «Гешарим», 2003), 158-159.

²⁶¹ Richard Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the noble*, XI.

non-Iranians; although this subject remains mostly unexplored. Some specific cases only were evidenced in Armenia, the Caucasus and the lands of Central Asia mostly among the Arabs²⁶².

As we saw, Zoroastrianism is traditionally called “the good religion”. Zoroastrian text *Sad dar-e bondaheš* 73: “Everyone who remains steadfast in the good religion of the Mazdā-worshippers in this time and does not give up the religion is better than all persons who have been here before him.” Zoroastrianism as a state religion even contained laws that demanded death penalty for a conversion to another religion²⁶³. Judaism, on the contrary, had continued to be less rigid from rabbinic times, at least in regard to various cultural assimilations and influences (Hellenism to be mentioned as an example). In general, Zoroastrians did not favor proselytizing²⁶⁴. Although, the Sassanian period demonstrated a considerable positive developments towards religious minorities in Iran (both Jews and Christians); the Sassanians had little impulse to proselytize, and in general limited this restriction applicable to people of Iranian origin only²⁶⁵. Actually, Zoroastrianism has never been known for missionary efforts²⁶⁶.

Zoroastrian is defined by birth and is ethnicity based. A child of two Zoroastrian parents is considered Zoroastrian too. Unlike Jewish, Zoroastrian identity descends through the father’s line. Since Zoroastrian was a close religious system that puts it on side of esotericism, the conversion to Zoroastrianism was not available to outsiders. Mixed marriages were not appreciated, either. Indeed, the situation will once change radically at the arrival of the Savior (*Saošyant*, literally “one who brings benefit”). The Savior will have the authority to convert people and most probably all mankind will be converted to Zoroastrianism at the End of Time, the final renovation of the world.

But what can we say about the relations amongst Zoroastrian and other traditions of the time in Sasanian Iran? Can we find more arguments of the rigidity of Zoroastrianism?

²⁶² Albert de Jong, “Zoroastrian Ideas about the Time before Zaratustra,” 207.

²⁶³ *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Vol.2., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York and London: Grand Publishing, Inc., 1997), 1189.

²⁶⁴ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther’s Garden*, 3.

²⁶⁵ James Robert Russell, “On Mysticism and Esotericism among the Zoroastrians,” in: *Armenian and Iranian Studies*, ed. James Russel, Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 549. See also Aptin Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the Star and the Cross*, 6-51.

²⁶⁶ *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 1189.

What is the core of Zoroastrianism then? What features do most clearly and essentially define Zoroastrian practice? When we come to both Judaism and Zoroastrianism, the the question is vital: what is focal in terms of the interrelation of religious traditions. The answer seems to be easily found as it is the main issue of strict laws of ritual purity versus ritual impurity. In this regard, Zoroastrianism appears to be the most specifically closed community towards other traditions. According to Magee, the ritual purity was essential for all Zoroastrian ceremonies, thus “impure” foreigners had to be excluded off. This setup finally resulted in the concept of secret rituals, reserved for a closed circle of elected only²⁶⁷. Most of Zoroastrian observance is based on purity laws.

According to Dr. Victorija Krjukova (The State Museum of History of Religions, St. Petersburg), many Middle-persian and modern Persian Zoroastrian religious prescriptions banned not only common meals or food transfer with other faiths believers, but even the acceptance of any items from them. Yet this rule was almost impossible to be followed in Sassanid Iran due to all kinds of diverse and ongoing contacts²⁶⁸. The above notion is closely connected to perceptions of ritual purity and impurity within Zoroastrianism, related to more general concepts of evil and good in terms of the dual nature. Ritual impurity issues are diversified and categorised in every smallest or single detail of each material substance or living creature, including even insects. This is very specific to Zoroastrian notion of creation of the Universe, largely reflected in *Bundahišn*.

Jacob Neusner refers to this issue in relation to menstrual taboo. Namely, Zoroastrian regulation of relationships consists primarily of the menstrual taboo observation (abstaining the menstrual impurity): if the other fails to follow it, his food (for example, gentile or Christian wine and cooking) is tabooed too. On the other hand, Jewish relation to the other is based upon a theological principle: if one worships idols, his food is a taboo. The above designates the outsider as the other in both religious traditions²⁶⁹.

We are concluding this chapter with the line of thought that there are more elements of rigid nature in Zoroastrian tradition in comparison to the other civil and religious traditions. Consequently, the possibility that Zoroastrian tradition was affected by external

²⁶⁷ M. D. Magee, *Persia and Creation of Judaism*. See http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/non-iranian/Judaism/Persian_Judaism/Persia_created_judaism.htm

²⁶⁸ Виктория Ю. Крюкова, *Смерть и похоронный обряд в зороастризме* (СПб.: Центр «Петербургское Востоковедение», 1997), 181.

²⁶⁹ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Zoroastrianism*, 106.

influences is notably limited. However, the probability of Zoroastrian tradition to be influential in regards to another traditions is not averted.

Part III.

1. Zoroastrianism and punishments in historical perspective and social context.

1.1. Phenomenon of the „hanging punishments”.

Now the time has come to turn to the topics respectfully related to our main thesis. Before we proceed with textual details, an overview of social context of „hanging punishments” to be given, since it represents one of outstanding features of Jewish and Zoroastrian visionary texts and is referred to in the similar texts of respectful Christian and Muslim traditions. Various forms of punishments are still carried out in modern Iran. Death penalty is assigned to adults and even teenagers. Hanging is practiced as a punishment for rape, murder, and child molestation; all hangings are executed in public.

The “hanging punishments” (in hell, particular sinners are hung up by the part of the body they have sinned with) as a textual phenomenon were attested earlier by Talmudic sources. The concept of such punishment might have been borrowed from Zoroastrians. Textually, this assumption could be proved by the comparative analysis of the Middle Persian Awn (9th–10th century) that actually consists of much older material and some other medieval visionary texts, including Pseudepigrapha, Judeo-Persian Midrash on the Ascension of Moses (approx. 9th–14th century), *Gedulat Moshe*, *Orot Hayyim* and even Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (the beginning of the 14th century). The analytical comparison of the inherent elements of the above sources is carried out in the succeeding chapter.

1.2. Social history of the „hanging punishments”. Case of ancient Iran.

Various groups of sinners subjected to be punished being hung up by certain parts of their bodies is referred in various texts of „tours of hell”. The emergence of such idea is not fully clear.

In ancient world, hanging was practised as a method of execution that did not lead to long lasting and very painful death like, for example, crucifixion. Hanging of women by hair was probably practised by Romans²⁷⁰. A concept of hanging seemed attractive to those who thought about punishments of afterlife since this method of execution was the easiest to be imagined neverending: it was possible to extend the process in a form of unending pain of a suffering victim without one's complete destruction.

Hanging is one of the most ancient forms of execution in the history, known to be invented and used widely in the Persian Empire. Punishments there were very severe. They included death, mutilation (cutting off ears, nose, lips, or castration), impalement upon a stake, deprivation of burial, strokes of the rod, payment of a certain weight of lead, forced labor. Upon Assyrian law, a murderer was handed over to the next of murdered kin, who could choose between putting to death or taking over his property. This approach could lead to blood feuds, since there was little control of the matter, and no cities of refuge were provided, as in Israel. The punishment for adultery was left to the husband of the traitress. He could put his wife to death, mutilate her, and punish her as he saw fit, or let her go free without penalty. The equal punishment had to be applied to the adulterous man. Many prisoners of war were skinned alive, blinded, or had their tongues torn out; they were impaled, burned, and put to death in other ways.

Ahasuerus used a 50 cubits (22 m) high stake to hang Haman. Ahasuerus also hanged two doorkeepers who had conspired against his life (Esther 7:9, 10; 2:21-23). As Persians considered fire to be sacred, they didn't use fire punishments. Indeed they concentrated on other vicious forms of punishment. We will see this notion being reflected in Zoroastrian hell punishments, too.

The most cruel laws that governed retaliation (Latin *lex talionis*) were especially prominent in Hammurabi's Babylon since ancient days. According to John Sassoon, *talion* by its definition was one of the methods to restore social balance in order to prevent or at least limit feud, basically expressed as revenge. In other words, the principle of *talion* means that „*the guilty party was made to suffer damage identical or equivalent to the damage he*

²⁷⁰ Shaul Lieberman, „On Sins and their Punishments,” in: *Texts and Studies* No 86. (New York: Ktav, 1974), 43.

*had caused*²⁷¹. We may talk of punishment equal to the committed offence. Sassoon is also convinced that Hammurabi's law of talion appears in the Bible „in a modified form”, expressed in a literal phrase „*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*”²⁷². It is clear that in the Bible (Exodus 21:22-25; Deuteronomy 19:16-21) the law of *talion* is present in a slightly moderated form. It anticipates punishing the guilty party, yet excludes the innocent party (the most cruel part of *talion*) off occurring in the laws of Hammurabi²⁷³. This shows that ancient Hebrew law was alternatively „*capable of departing from the regional norm*”²⁷⁴.

The complicated system of punishments was popular during Medieval times. Hanging was the most common method of execution. The hanging as a death penalty was considered to be extremely severe and was used only in cases of enormous offence like murder, treason, and arson. This was a particularly shameful way of execution. Due to its “shameful” nature, hanging was often reserved as a punishment for peasants while the noblemen were often beheaded instead.

We will deal in detail with phenomenon of hanging punishments in texts later on.

²⁷¹ John Sassoon, *Ancient Laws and Modern Problems. The Balance between Justice and a Legal System* (London: Third Millennium Publishing, 2001), 144, 146.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

2. Some distinctive features of visionary genre.

2.1. „Demonstrative explanations” in Zoroastrian texts.

Such Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts as *Bundahišn*, *Denkārd*, *Dadestan-I-Denig*, *Mainyo-I-Khard* often use the concentrated expression in the format of questions-and-answers (i.e., *responša*) to discuss various religious, legal and social issues. Daily issues on purity, for example, are solved by applying dialogical structure to narrative. Higher authorities are questioned for explanations.

The following is a dialogue between Zarathushtra and Ahura Mazda:

“O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! If a man shall throw on the ground a bone of a dead dog, or of a dead man, as large as the top joint of the little finger, and if grease or marrow flow from it on to the ground, what penalty shall he pay?”

Ahura Mazda answered: “Thirty stripes with the Aspahe – astra, thirty stripes with the Sraosho–karana.” (Vendidad, Fargard 6:10-11).

In *Dadestan-I-Denig* a concentrated form is used too to reveal issues of postmortem existence in heaven and hell. It contains questions and subsequent explanations in the following manner:

“1. As to the thirty-third question and reply, that which you ask is thus: In what manner is there one way of the righteous from the Daitih peak to heaven, and one of the wicked to hell; and what is their nature?”

2. The reply is this, that: one is for ascent, and one for descent; and on account of both being of one appearance I write thus much for understanding and full explanation, that is to say: (3) The righteous souls pass over on the Chinwad bridge by spiritual flight and the power of good works; and they step forth up to the star, or to the moon, or to the sun station, or to the endless light [Anagran]. 4. The soul of the wicked, owing to its falling from the bridge, its lying demon, and the pollution collected by its sin, they shall lead therefrom to the descent into the earth, as both ways lead from that bridge on the Daitih peak.” (*Dadestan-I-Denig* 34:1-4).

2.2. „Demonstrative explanations” in *Arda Wiraz* and *Jewish visionary texts*.

We have already referred to the term „demonstrative explanations” several times. Princeton scholar Martha Himmelfarb invented it in order to analyse particular structure of texts of visionary genre („the tours of hell”) of possible Mesopotamian Babylonian literature (cuneiform texts) origin and largely available in earlier Judeo-Christian Pseudepigraphal and later medieval texts. The „demonstrative explanations” appear in texts as a structuring feature and are common in both accounts of tours of hell and heavenly ascents.

Visions of hell according to Himmelfarb „take the form of guided tours” as the travelling visionary figure asks his guide to explain each displayed scene of the otherworld²⁷⁵. This particular form of communication is present in various Judeo-Christian apocalyptic pseudepigraphal texts (for instance, 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, 3 Baruch, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, the Testament of Abraham, the Apocalypse of Abraham, the Testament of Levi), as well as in Medieval Muslim tours of hell (the Book of the Ladder) and Dante’s “Divine Comedy”. Christian visions (the Apocalypse of Paul, the Apocalypse of Peter) in this line are not the exception, either. Usually travellers are guided by higher heavenly authorities, angels, biblical heroes or saints who attained heavenly status (Jesus, God himself, the Holy Spirit, Virgin Mary, Elijah, the archangel Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, etc.). In exceptional cases travelling visionary can be guided by hell creature, for example, angel Nasargiel, the guardian of *Gehinnom* as in Judeo-Persian midrash on ascension of Moses, etc. European medieval visionary journeys may slightly differ to the ones described in Pseudepigraphic texts in terms of a particular aspect of the voyage: while in the former the traveller is a holy being, usually a well-known biblical figure (for example, Abraham, Moses), in later - a simple human being, and most importantly, a contemporary most familiar to the readers²⁷⁶. For instance, in Dante’s Comedy, Dante is lead by Vergil, the most influential poet of ancient Roman world. Gribanov designates this “*an encounter between Medieval Western and archaic Oriental traditions in the visionary literature*”²⁷⁷.

²⁷⁵ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 45.

²⁷⁶ А.Б. Грибанов, „Заметки о жанре видений,” 68. See also „Б.И.Ярхо и исследование жанра видений,” 28.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

Himmelfarb points to a specific literary form of visionary texts. At each displayed scene that represents a certain group of sinners, the visionary figure usually questions, “*Who are these (people)?*“, and his companion explains, “*These are they who...*” or “*These who...are*” (for example, committed adultery, etc.). Explanatory phrases “*These are they who...*” then are designated by Himmelfarb as „demonstrative explanations”.

These are the most common patterns of dialogue available in both Muslim and Zoroastrian tours; Himmelfarb does not point out any specific significance of this commonplace, however she supposes that AWN and Muslim tours may have been influenced by earlier texts of Judeo-Christian tradition²⁷⁸. Himmelfarb would rather think that Christian tours of hell had influenced Zoroastrian tour (AWN) as well as later Muslim tours²⁷⁹. Although she does not elaborate more on Zoroastrian (AWN) and Muslim tours of hell, M. Himmelfarb inclines to think that „demonstrative explanations” are based upon the earlier Judeo-Christian tradition pre-dating the rise of Islam²⁸⁰. However, this position remains unsolved and is not argued sufficiently. Richard Bauckham determines this as a definite weakness of Himmelfarb’s work as she had ignored the fact that early Judaism lacked a developed concept of tours of hell in general in the 1st century C.E.²⁸¹. Instead, she points to Greco-Roman tours of hell (*nekyiai*) that contain an extended form of „demonstrative explanations” tradition and their specific modifications²⁸². The „demonstrative explanations” lead back to the Enochic Book of the Watchers largely borrowed from Greek conceptions and later extended into Judeo-Christian literary tradition²⁸³. Later when we will arrive to a close textual analysis to find more common elements in Enochic and Zoroastrian tradition than in Enochic and Christian tradition.

Arda Wirāz asks *Srōsh* the pious and Adar the angel almost a hundred questions and answers of the “demonstrative explanations”²⁸⁴ form “*What sin was committed by this body, whose soul suffers such a punishment?*” and receives an answer with explanation “*This is the soul of the wicked who...*”.

²⁷⁸ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 47.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁸⁰ Martha Himmelfarb, *op.cit.*, 48.

²⁸¹ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 51.

²⁸² Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 49.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

All texts mentioned above are written in a dialogical form between two persons. In most cases, this is represented by a righteous person, a saint, a prophet or an angel and sometimes even by the guardian of hell (this exception is made by the Judeo-Persian Midrash on the Ascension of Moses).

Part IV. Contents of the visionary journeys

1. Distinctive Zoroastrian elements in regard to hell punishments.

The whole textual tradition (both Zoroastrian and Pseudepigraphic apocalyptic in respect to tours of hell) is to be considered to research its certain elements in terms of their foreign or „domestic” origin in order to clarify the possible direction of influence. For example, if the location of Hell in the north characteristic of Jewish is pseudepigraphic; if there are any other notions and versions; and which specific texts reflect on this consequently. Are torturing or noxious creatures always present at punishment scenes? What are the variations, omissions or substitutions, if any? Are the hanging punishments severe in character and what social structure can be reconstructed from behind? These are the questions to be addressed in the following chapters.

1.1. Specifics of hell descriptions.

Alice Turner in her comprehensive work „The History of Hell” provides an interesting observation in regard to hell imagery. She points out a number of certain elements that reappear in the accounts of the underworld, i.e. a mountain barrier, a river, a boat and boatman, a bridge, gates and guardians, a tree. All these elements are present in ancient Babylonian (Mesopotamian) mythological accounts on the underworld (so-called „descent motif”) except for the bridge, namely, the *Chinvat Bridge* in later Zoroastrian literature²⁸⁵. When Inanna descends to the Great Below, she is hanged from a stake; and this is probably the first hanging punishment in hell ever mentioned. In *Gilgamesh*, the underworld has seven gates; this constant number will reappear later in Zoroastrian tradition on hell tours. The outstanding feature in regard to the imagery of hell concerns various measurements of the underworld expressed in time and space categories.

²⁸⁵ Alice Turner, *The History of Hell*, 5-6.

1.2. General Imagery of Hell.

According to Zoroastrian texts, hell (*dōžax*) lies deep below under the *Chinvat bridge*²⁸⁶. The entrance to the hell is through a crater of an active volcano²⁸⁷, the “Arežūr ridge” or “the direction of Arūm”, located at the extreme northern ridge of the *Albūrz* (Bundahishn 12:16) while the other part of this bridge rests on the eastern ridges where presumably Paradise is located²⁸⁸. The *Albūrz* mountain (possibly, mount *Damāvand*²⁸⁹) (Bundahišn 12:8; Vendidad 3:7) is filled with *khrafstars* (together with the evil demon *Dahaka* being imprisoned inside mount *Damāvand*²⁹⁰ obsessed with these creatures), noxious creatures to be specified later on. Touraj Daryaeae makes a reference to the Islamic sources stating that during the 8th century CE there was a fortification located by the *Damāvand* Mountain (see Fig.1.) where priests accused of Zoroastrian heresy lived, but the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi destroyed the fort and killed the priests: could this be, he asks, the source of negative reference to the north in the Middle Persian texts when dealing with heresy and bad religion?²⁹¹

²⁸⁶ Mary Boyce explains that the idea of *Činvatō Peretu*, „the crossing of the Separator”, developed from a ferry-place used to ship underground waters (originally a bridge over underground waters) in remote past and was combined with the new idea of Paradise on high evolved [transformed] into concept of bridge over an abyss resting on highest mountain on one end and path to heaven (paradise) on the other - Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Handbuch der Orientalistik. Vol.1. The Early Period. (Leiden-New York-Kobenhavn-Köln: E.J.BRILL, 1989), 117. See also Pavry, p.92.

²⁸⁷ Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 80.

²⁸⁸ Mitra Ara, *Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Tradition*, 201.

²⁸⁹ Dastur Pavry suggests that the enormous mount *Damāvand*, once an active volcano with overflowing lava, is a fitting imagery for Hell - Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 80. Mount *Damāvand* (also *Donbavand*) is the highest peak (5671 m above sea level) in modern Iran and actually in the whole Middle East and the highest volcano in all Asia.

²⁹⁰ This legend of mythical region has many variations within Zoroastrian tradition, including several esoteric trends; for more on this see James Robert Russell, “On Mysticism and Esotericism among the Zoroastrians,” 538-542.

²⁹¹ Daryaeae, Touraj, *Sasanian Persia*, 91.

Figure 1. Mount Damāvand summit with crater. Space image image by NASA



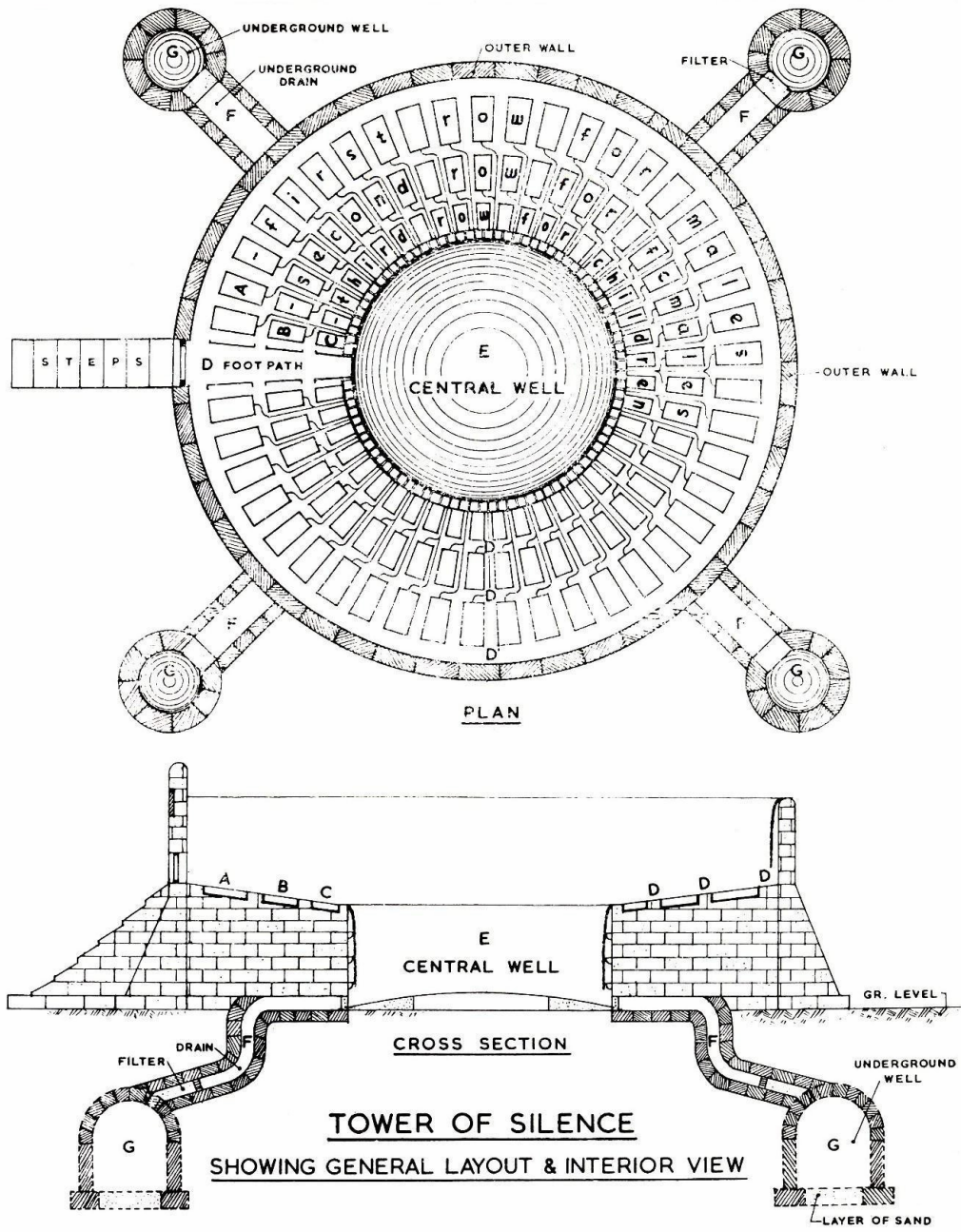
In AWN, hell is depicted as a deep narrow well or pit filled with enormous noxious creatures or *khrafstras* (AW 18:6-13). We may only pose a question if this depiction is based on specific burial regulations in the Tower of silence (Avestan *dakhma*²⁹²), where after a dead body was disposed, its dry bones were collected and thrown into a deep central well. The well accordingly was only a part of the larger underground drainage system (see Fig.2.) to fulfill the major Zoroastrian tenet: „*The Mother Earth shall not be defiled*”²⁹³. Mary Boyce provides a clear and logical explanation of burial rites in *dakhmas* as closely related to a more ancient concept of a home of spirits of the dead located beneath the earth²⁹⁴.

²⁹² John Waterhouse argues that *dakhma* as a burial custom in its earliest stage did not originate from Persia, and that Zoroastrians did not practise it until the Sassanian period - John Waterhouse, *Zoroastrianism*, 106.

²⁹³ Reference to a Model of a Tower of Silence. With Explanatory Notes Relating to the Mode of the Disposal of Dead Bodies of the Parsees (Bombay: The Education Society's Press, 1885), 4.

²⁹⁴ Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol.1, 109.

Figure 2. Tower of Silence. Image is taken from John Hinnells "Persian Mythology"



In general, the state of the wicked or sinners in hell is described in Zoroastrian text *Dādestān i Dēnīg* (“Religious Judgments”): „*There is no comfort or pleasure or joy in it. There is in it all stench and pollution and pain and evil and discomfort.*” (26:3-5). In Pahlavi texts, hell darkness is described as so intense and so dense that it can be grasped by hand (Mainyo-i-Khard 7:31), while the stench in the air is so thick that it can be cut with a knife (Bundahišn 28:47). This is the most stinking place in the world: “...*though all the wood which is in the world, were all put on to the fire in the most stinking and gloomy hell, it would never emit a smell*” (AWN 54:4). Apart from darkness and stench, hell is the coldest beyond description in one place and the hottest in another, while its location is towards the evil direction to the northern quarter (AWN 17:10). This is expressed in Wirāz words: „... *I beheld cold and heat, drought and stench, to such a degree as I never saw, nor heard of, in the world*” (AWN 18:3).

All in all, the above appears to be a concrete description of Zoroastrian hell.

1.3. Spatial and temporal measurements.

How is it possible to make a visual expression of the undescribable reality? How are these tours of hell measured in terms of time and space categories? What about the travelers Wiraz, Enoch, Abraham and others who embarked on journeys? In some cases precise and firm distances of a journey are provided and space categories established. Yet, the indications of immeasurable or indescribable proportions of hell are met. Off course, these are the entities that lie beyond descriptions in terms of time and space categories. It is interesting to refer to specifics of a travelogue on tours of hell as this corresponds to the actual measurements of daily journeys made in ancient times in the Near East. Various units of measurement were provided to indicate length, width and time span. This is true also in regard to distance measurement in Judeo-Christian and Zoroastrian hell. I would suggest to begin with descriptions provided by Zoroastrian texts first.

In AWN, the distance in hell is not particularly measured²⁹⁵, yet hell is described as very narrow (18:6) according to the words of an entering person: “*And this [place] is so narrow that because of its narrowness no one can stand [there]*”²⁹⁶ every one thinks thus: ‘*I am alone*’ (...) and when three days and nights have elapsed he says thus: ‘*The nine thousand years are completed, and they will not release me!*’” (18:10-11; 54:8-11). The narrowness is attested thus: “*...as close as the ear to the eye, and as many as the hairs on the mane of a horse, so close and many in number, the souls of the wicked stand*” (AWN 54:5-6). Still, AWN states that the depth of hell is so deep that its bottom cannot be reached by a thousand cubits (54:3).

Dadestan-i Denig goes on to state only a question (so-called *thirty-first question*) of temporal nature of hell with precision: “*...Are the boundaries of hell clear and fixed, or if not what are they like?*”²⁹⁷ (32:3). The reply is provided: The existence and “*the boundaries of hell are not limited (samani-ait) before the resurrection*” and “*until the time of the renovation of the universe (Frashegird)*” (32:6, 10; AWN 64:13; 87:9).

Zoroastrian tractate *Mainyo-i-Khard* (“Book of the Judgments of the Spirit of Wisdom”) describes an existence of a sinner in hell as a “*mischief of long duration*”²⁹⁸ and once again, this time is limited by the renovation of the universe (2:182, 193). *Bundahišn* (“Creation”) and *Dēnkard* (“Acts of Faith”) also state that sinners will stay in hell until “*the future existence*” (*Bundahišn* 15:9; *Dēnkard* 13:4; 41:6). No specific proportions of hell are given in Zoroastrian texts.

Interestingly, there is no specified graduation of compartments or circles in Zoroastrian hell; however punishments are abundantly displayed in striking details in AWN. Corresponding to a fourfold division of heaven, Pahlavi texts mention four basic hells or stages. These are the Hell of Evil Thought (*Dush-humat*), the Hell of Evil Word (*Dush-hukht*), the Hell of Evil Deed (*Dush-huvarsh*t), and the Worst Existence of Darkness

²⁹⁵ As we shall see, particular measurements are given of *Chinvat Bridge*.

²⁹⁶ Russian translation provides more precise translation than the English one. Please, refer to *Пехлевийская Божественная Комедия*.

²⁹⁷ Translation is provided according to published text of *Dadestan-i Denig: Sacred Books of the East*, volume 18, trans. E. W. West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1882) at <http://www.avesta.org/mp/dd.htm#chap27>

²⁹⁸ Translation by E.W.West adapted by Eileen Gardiner – see *Zoroastrian Hell. Visions, Tours and Descriptions of the Infernal Otherworld*, ed. Eileen Gardiner (New York: Italica Press, 2006), 47.

which is the closest to *Ahriman* (Mainyo-i-Khard 2:182, 183; 7:20, 21). In some cases, the grades of hell are spoken vaguely without any definite number (Bundahišn 11; Dadestan-i Denig 20:4; 33:3-5). Still, the following quote certainly makes us think there is a certain division (termed „a place”) of hells: „*There is a place where, as to cold, it is such as that of the coldest frozen snow. 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. There is a place where, as to stench, it is such that they stagger about (bara larzhend) and fall down. And the darkness is always such like as though it is possible for them to seize upon it with the hand*” (Mainyo-i-Khard 7:27-31).

To conclude, no particular measurements of hell are available, but its extreme narrowness is emphasized in Zoroastrian texts. It is stated continuously that hell punishments of departed souls in Zoroastrianism are of temporal duration. We will return once more to this topic in a chapter about the measure of torturing creatures.

1.4. Chinvat bridge.

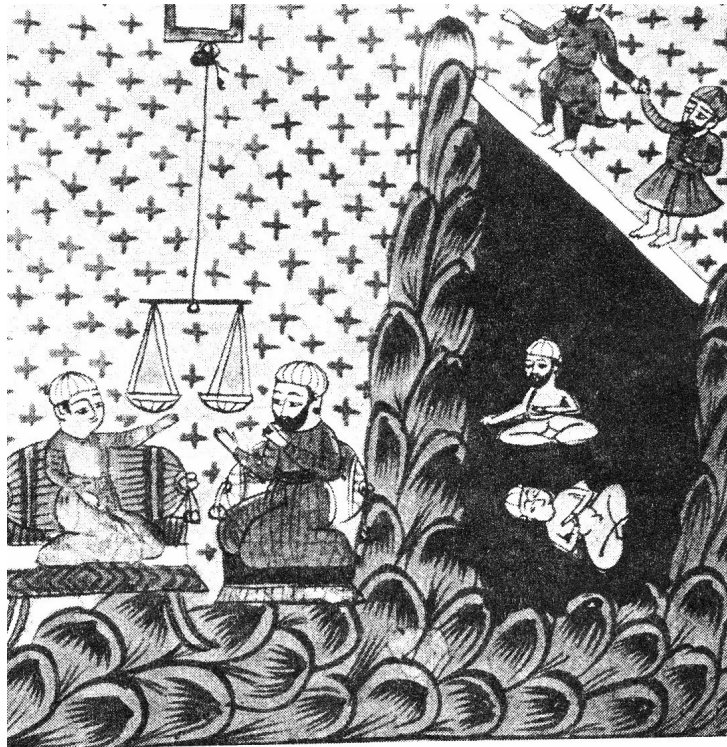
Bridges and ladders as dangerous mediums of transitional crossing were frequently mentioned as a passage to hereafter in various religious and theological texts of the Near East. It is interesting however, that bridges are totally absent in biblical imagery of afterlife as far as we can may concern specifics of this notion. None of the early Christian apocalypses contains the notion of a bridge except for the Apocalypse of Paul²⁹⁹, either. The imagery of the bridge was not mentioned until the Middle Ages (from the 12th -15th centuries) when it appeared in several European Christian texts, including the Visions of Gregory the Great (4th book of *the Dialogues*), St.Patrick’s Purgatory, Tundale’s and Thurkill’s Visions, Dante’s *Commedia*.

In Zoroastrianism a period following three days and nights when the soul of a deceased person has left its body³⁰⁰ for a dangerous path to afterlife, it reaches *Chinvat bridge* (see Fig.3.).

²⁹⁹ Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, 77.

³⁰⁰ This is stated to occur on the dawn of the fourth day after death - Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 27.

Figure 3. Arda Wiraz is lead across the Chinvat bridge by Srōsh. From Parsi Gujarati manuscript A.D.1660-1670



The Account-Keeper's Bridge or „Bridge of the Separator”, Avestan: *činvatō peretav* (Yasna 46:10) resembles the bridge of *Sirat* in Muslim tradition³⁰¹. After crossing the bridge is accomplished, a soul has to face its final destiny. The bridge is described as exclusively thin and narrow for a crossing sinner and easy-to-cross for a righteous person. *Chinvat* is described as follows: „...that bridge is like a beam of many sides, of whose edges (*postō*) there are some which are broad, and there are some which are thin and sharp; its broad sides (*sukiha*) are so large that its width is twenty-seven reeds (*nai*)³⁰², and its sharp sides are so contracted (*tang*) that in thinness it is just like the edge of a razor. (...) Moreover, the bridge becomes a broad bridge for the righteous, as much as the height of nine spears

³⁰¹ As we shall see, some scholars tend to think that *As-Sirat* bridge in Muslim hadiths is an elaborated form of Zoroastrian *Chinvat*.

³⁰² Pavry translation of the text provides „*twenty-seven arrows (*nāδ*)*” instead. It is a measure of distance, equivalent to approximately 4 feet 8 inches - Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 94.

(nizhako) — and the length of those which they carry is each separately three reeds³⁰³; and it becomes a narrow bridge for the wicked, even unto a resemblance to the edge of a razor” (Dādestān i Dēnīg, 21:3, 5).

As we may see, the Bridge (*pūhl*) is precisely measured in Zoroastrian texts. According to AWN, it is a *frasang* wide (5:1). Pavry provides more accurate rendering on details of crossing the bridge according to Pahlavi writings: „...*The Bridge becomes broad or narrow according to the nature of the soul that steps upon it, presenting to the righteous a pathway nine spears (nēzak) or twenty-seven arrows (nāδ) or a league (frasang) in breadth; but it turns to the godless man a sharp edge (tāy i tēž), like that of a sword (šapšēr) or a razor (ōstarak), so that his soul, when half-way across, falls into the abyss of Hell*”³⁰⁴.

There are several more precise accounts made by the same scholar. These also describe an elaborate nature of the Bridge according to *Bundahišn* (30: 1, 9-13): „...*In that middle place (i.e. the middle part of the Bridge, situated on the Cikāt i dāitīk), there is a sharp edge (tāy i tēž) which stands like a sword (šapšēr), whose length and breadth are of the height (or extent) of nine spears (nēzak)*³⁰⁵; and there stand the spiritual Yazats, who purify spiritually the souls of the righteous; and (there is also) a spiritual dog (sak I) at the head (sar) of the Bridge; and Hell is below the Bridge.

Then the soul is carried to the base of Mount Harburz [that is, to the very edge of the ridge (gūk)]; to the summit (bālist) of the Chikāt it goes up, where stands the sharp edge.

Then, if it be righteous, the sharp edge stands in its breadth (i.e. presents its broad side). (...)

If the soul be wicked, when it comes from the ridge (gūk) over the Chikāt, that sharp edge (tāy i tēž) stands with the same edge (i.e. continues to stand edgewise), and does not give a passage (vitarg nē dahēt); and it is obliged against its will (akāmakīhā) to walk over the same edge. With three steps which it takes forward – which are the evil thoughts (dušmat), evil words (dušuxt), and evil deeds (dušvaršt) that it has performed – it is cut down

³⁰³ Pavry provides „*three arrows (nāδ)*” which being combined with nine spears (nēzak) makes up the length of 27 arrows – Ibid., 95.

³⁰⁴ This is a reference to *Dādestān i Dēnīg*, 21:2-8; see Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 91.

³⁰⁵ Pavry explains this as a unit of linear measure, equivalent to about 14 feet which would make the Bridge approx. 126 feet wide - Ibid., 92.

(*burīnēt*) from the head (*sar*) of the Bridge, and falls headlong to Hell, and experiences (lit.sees) allkinds of afflictions”³⁰⁶.

It is clear, that the soul of the wicked person falls down from the middle of the Bridge because of exhaustion (*siparīh*) and the sharpness of the edge. This passage to Hell is compared to the one walking upon ground studded with sharp points and in the middle of sickening stench³⁰⁷.

Sinners and the wicked who fall down into hell (Pahlavi *dōžax*) are then forced to endure perpetual tortures. Here we will omit some other details of Zoroastrian individual judgement scenery and will deal a bit closer with a meeting of *Daēna* in a chapter on later developments of these concepts.

Very similar descriptions resembling Zoroastrian ones are found in Muslim texts³⁰⁸. All the souls have to cross the Bridge *as-Sirat* which lies across heaven and hell and is finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword, giving an easy passage to the righteous souls, yet the souls of the wicked are unable cross it and fall headlong into hell. It is the imagery of a bridge considered as a decisive crossing medium of hereafter. Such concept is most vividly elaborated and depicted in later Muslim accounts, which we do not find earlier than Zoroastrian ones. This requires more detailed scholarly attention. Some muslim legends go so far as to reveal a concept of even more than one bridge (*sirat*) to enter hereafter following the second trial³⁰⁹. Ibn Arabi describes seven slippery passages that correspond to the breaking of basic Islamic laws – faith, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, ablution, dealing with neighbour leading through the purgatory³¹⁰. We will deal more with this when we come to the consideration of Muslim texts on *Miraj*.

Finally, the The Apocalypse of Paul strikingly provides a parallel image of a bridge stretching from the earth to heaven across hell as „fine as a hair”. Miguel Asin indicates this to be a clear copy of Muslim *sirat*, notion of Persian origin³¹¹.

³⁰⁶ Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 92-93.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁰⁸ Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire*, 41.; Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2002), 115.

³⁰⁹ Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 116.

³¹⁰ Miguel Asin, *op.cit.*, 116

³¹¹ Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 183.

1.5. Details in hell punishments.

First of all, various technical terms are used in Zoroastrian sources to describe all processes of executing punishments. Here we may consider the specific religious language related to Zoroastrian hell tours. AWN is the main source of these; however it refers to earlier conceptions as well. Jewish and consequently Christian and Muslim texts, as it seems, were following these in their own way and perspective.

Now we should deal in detail with the specific „mechanism of torture”, available mostly in AWN. There are 80 chapters altogether (Chapters 19-99) dedicated to various kinds of hell tortures in AWN; yet I would suggest to concentrate particularly on so-called hanging punishments³¹².

1.5.1. Hanging punishments.

Arda Wirāz observes different kinds of severe punishments: „*Then I saw the souls of the wicked who died, and ever suffer torment and punishment, in that dreadful, dark place of punishment of various kinds, such as driving snow, and severe cold, and the heat of brisk-burning fire, and foul stench, and stone and ashes, hail and rain, and many other evils.*” (AWN 55:1); there is a group of hanging punishments amongst mentioned.

The category of hanging punishments is typical for many (but not all!) texts of tours of hell genre. It pictures various hell punishments in detail. A part of a body or limb which has sinned in this life, is punished; a corresponding measure of punishment is hereafter applied. Hanging punishments usually are accompanied by demonstrative explanations, discussed earlier.

AWN mentions 10 clearly stated punishments of suspension (hanging) altogether (see Table 1.).

³¹² This term has been introduced by Martha Himmelfarb and has been widely used by scholars so far.

Table 1. Hanging punishments according to AWN

Textual references	Limbs under-going punishment / (gender)	Sins committed	noxious creatures (single, numerous, none)
24:1-7	Breasts suspended / (women)	leaving husband, adultery	Numerous
26:1-5	body suspended while the tongue stretched out constantly	scornful attitude towards husband and defiance, incl. cursing	None
37:1-7	headdown suspended; whole body gnawed constantly (men / women)	water and fire disregarded, fire extinguished intentionally	numerous with addition of snakes and scorpions
67:1-10	suspended by one leg in hell of darkness (man)	city confided for administration, but nothing proper done	none
69:1-10	tied by one leg, head downwards (women)	adultery, cohabitation (i.e. sex) with another man	numerous frogs, scorpions, snakes, ants, fls, worms and ther noxious creatures
74:1-5	tied, head downwards, by one leg (not specified)	beasts, cattle and sheep unlawfully slaughtered	<i>passive</i>

Table 1. continued

77:1-10	suspended with the posteriors to the face [or “head downwards in melted brass”] (not specified)	cruelty against animals (burden unlawfully heavy, no sufficient food)	(not specified)
79:1-9	suspended, in hell, by one leg (not specified)	unjust judge, taking bribes and making false decisions	<i>passive</i>
80:1-7	suspended, head downwards (several sinners, not specified)	unjust and false measures for selling goods	“they” (not stated clearly)
88:1-7	suspended, head downward, from a gibbet (a man)	improper sexual intercourse deceiving and seducing the wives of others	“they” (not stated clearly)

As we saw from the discussion earlier, Zoroastrianism is defined by the strict observance of ritual purity laws, essential for all Zoroastrian ceremonies. Also the system of hell punishments in Awn is closely connected to the perceptions of ritual purity and impurity related to more general concepts of good and evil: issues of ritual impurity are diversified and categorised for every smallest or single piece of each material substance. Thus, Zoroastrian sinners who have transgressed in this life defiling themselves with impure matters³¹³, have to suffer even greater calamities in the hereafter.

The list of sins committed in Awn included: social regulations (economic transgressions, hospitality laws, false witness and judging, administration failures, etc.); specific religious ordinances (in regard to sacred fire, earth and water, prayers, etc.); sexual transgressions, etc.

³¹³ Interestingly, later we will see that Judeo-Persian Ascension of Moses is referring to breaking of Jewish kosher laws in the hereafter.

In brief, crimes committed by sinners in AWN correspond to the following:

1. Sodomy and adultery.
2. Violation of menstruation taboo.
3. Makeup.
4. Unlawfully slaughtering livestock.
5. Cruelty to animals.
6. Disgrace of sacred animals.
7. Sorcery.
8. Infanticide.
9. Falsifying measurements and injustice.
10. Unfair judging.
11. Falsehood and sharp tongue.
12. Lying.
13. Manufacturing and distributing narcotic drugs.
14. Uncharitable behaviour.
15. Breaking of hospitality laws.
16. Disobedience to rulers.

Many sinners are enforced to digest putrid substances (most often as a punishment for desacrating water and fire, breaking menstruation taboos and the practices of sorcery). This could be considered as the most extreme things to befall beyond the worst Zoroastrian imagination (corresponding hell as “Worst Existence”). As we saw, this is done in strict concordance (*talion* principle) with sins committed. This resembles Gilgamesh account on condition of sinners in the netherworld.

Which sins are most severe punished according to Zoroastrian sources? Brutally severe transgressions were of course related to the violation of core religious tenets. Should water and fire be disregarded, sinners (both men and women) in hell will be suspended headdown, one’s whole body being gnawed constantly by numerous snakes and scorpions (AWN 37:1-7). Another punishment of this particular sin would include permanent enforced digestion of sewage (excrement) and constant beating by stones and axes (AWN 41:1-8). In AWN, the hanging punishments related to adultery belong to the fiercest. Women are punished by breasts suspension (24:1-7) or one leg headdown (69:1-10), while men are punished by suspension of head downward from a gibbet (88:1-7). Following is an example from AWN in full description:

“I also saw the soul of a woman who was suspended, by the breasts, to hell; and its noxious creatures (*khrafstars*) seized her whole body.

And I asked thus: 'What sin was committed by this body, whose soul suffers such a punishment?'

Srosh the pious, and Adar the angel, said thus: 'This is the soul³¹⁴ of that wicked woman who, in the world, left her own husband, and gave herself to other men, and committed adultery'" (AWN, 24:1-7).

According to Himmelfarb, Pseudepigraphic Judeo-Christian tradition of tours of hell in terms of punishment for sexual transgression most often reveals women to be suspended by their breasts (in Jewish tours) or hair (in Christian tours) while men by their genitals and eyes (see Table 11 and 12). The only reference to women suspended by the genitals is found at the later Muslim text *the Book of the Ladder* (chapt. 79)³¹⁵.

In AWN, the punishment cases of “them” being in charge of the process of execution, the particular tormentors are implied. Most probably these are demons (*daevas*) or noxious creatures (*khrafstars*). We will refer to these later on.

Hanging as a method of punishment in afterlife clearly appears to be an extra biblical phenomenon that comes outside the established biblical tradition³¹⁶. In other words, the subject refers to a non-Jewish source. The only task accordingly is to research the source of its potential external inspiration. M. Himmelfarb had concluded that hanging punishment as prevalent of all death punishment was popular since the late Second Temple period and accordingly has appeared in texts from then onwards³¹⁷. Bauckham points out that there is no proof of Jewish origin of hanging punishments as measure-for-measure (*lex talionis*

³¹⁴ As we see, in AWN text refers to sufferings of a sinner's soul. In Hebrew Apocalypse of Elijah it is referred to the wicked in hell as 'souls' (*nafshot / animae*) (cf. The Apocalypse of Zephaniah 2:8; 10:3). This is very unusual in early tours of hell (see 1 Enoch 22:3-13) Also the angels of punishment are present in punishment scenes (2 Enoch 10:1, 1 Enoch 53:3; 56:1; 62:11; 63:1).

³¹⁵ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 84.

³¹⁶ Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 289.

³¹⁷ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 169.

principle) punishments³¹⁸. Indeed, this kind of punishment was more prominent in Jewish accounts of hell than probably in Greek ones³¹⁹.

Silverstein emphasizes hanging punishment executed as suspension of a particular part of sinner's body as a hell torment to be common in the earlier Christian visionary literature, namely, the Apocalypse of Peter³²⁰, the Slavonic Enoch, the Ethiopic text of the Apocalypse of the Virgin, and the extended versions of the Apocalypse of Paul (the 3rd cent. C.E.)³²¹. In terms of Apocalypse of Peter and Paul, the Gnostic texts are of Nag-Hammadi origin, where Greek, Semitic and Iranian influences are melted together. Ideas of Mazdaean Zoroastrianism "passed into Gnostic texts not directly from the Iranian lore, but were already accepted and assimilated in the Judaeo-Aramaean world since the pre-Christian times. And a few examples of this syncretistic process are to be found in the Nag-Hammadi texts"³²².

1.5.2. The Fall of Satan motif and its relation to a fate of a sinner in hell.

The motif or primordial myth of the fall of Satan is clearly extra biblical and originally non-Jewish (see Fig.4.). There are several allusions to this myth in the biblical literature - Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-18; Luke 10:18-20; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4 (sinfull angels in „chains of darkness” of hell or tartarized, „cast into hell” – Greek *tartarōsas* - according to Alan Bernstein, the term streses cross-cultural influence leading back to Greek sources³²³) and pseudepigraphal as well as rabbinic literature - 2 Enoch 29:4-5; Targum Job 28:7. Raphael Patai suggests that simplified references were made amongst biblical texts indirectly to the myth (omitting certain details, elements – like Satan) since the concept was well known during biblical period and there was no need to retell it in full detail³²⁴.

³¹⁸ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 216.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

³²⁰ Himmelfarb defines this text as a successor of a Jewish tour of hell with hanging punishments- Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 169.

³²¹ Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, 69.

³²² E.Albrile, Zoroaster at Nag-Hammadi. See http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/zoroastian_nag_hammadi.htm

³²³ Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 339.

³²⁴ Р.Грейвс, Р. Парай, *Иудейские Мифы. Книга Бытия* (Москва: Б.С.Г.–ИРЕСС, 2002), 80.

In regards to the Christian (New Testament) texts, Bernstein explains that mythical material³²⁵ as the antecedent background story is used as a method in order 1) to invoke eternal punishment promoting discipline within the early church; 2) to illustrate the conquest of Jesus death and benefits of redemption³²⁶. Accordingly, here we observe the different application of the motif, namely, modified for Christian concerns. Fall of Satan as a theological discourse, going beyond a mere literary motif, is often visited in the works of early Church fathers (for example, Patristic sources by Augustine, Athanasius, St. Ephrem) and is an integrated part of Gnostic system.

In an original Persian myth, Satan is reported to be fallen down from heaven because of his disobedience to the Almighty. This myth is retold by Jeffrey Burton Russell. In the beginning *Ohrmazd* (the Almighty) is aware of existence of *Ahriman* (the Evil Being), while *Ahriman* in the darkness on the other side of emptiness does not know of *Ohrmazd*. During the first period of three thousand years *Ahriman* catches a glimpse of light, and then becomes envious and willing to overtake the domination. While *Ohrmazd* creates representatives of good creation, *Ahriman* produces representatives of evil creation, namely various kinds of noxious creatures. Due to his envy, *Ahriman* is harming the creation of *Ohrmazd* by darkness, lust and chaos. Although *Ohrmazd* is aware that his enemy should be destroyed, out of his goodness he wants to withhold a battle. He offers *Ahriman* peace out of his goodness and love should praise his good creation. However, *Ahriman* refuses to do so. Then *Ohrmazd* predicts the unescapable destruction of *Ahriman*, and *Ahriman*, shocked by the terrifying revelation, disappears into obscurity of inward darkness for three thousand years. At the third period of three thousand years, *Ahriman* awakes of his sleep for another cosmic battle, yet his efforts are unsuccessful: with a fiercest force he breaks an enormous hole in the earth and immerses himself in primordial waters on the other side³²⁷. The description is taken from Zoroastrian *Greater Bundahishn* (or *Iranian Bundahishn* – „Greater book of

³²⁵ Myth is defined as „a powerful narrative that guides, structures, and even scripts the imagination, thinking, and perception of a people as they work out their place in the world, their collective identity, and their relationship to time, eternity, and God...the term „myth” conveys the driving force exercised by the constellation of images, emotions, precepts, and behavioral models conveyed by the New Testament.” Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 249.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 251, 253.

³²⁷ Дж.Б.Рассел, *Дьявол. Восприятие зла с древнейших времен до раннего христианства* (СПб.: Евразия, 2001), 131, 138.

Creation”): „Then, the Evil Spirit [Ahriman], with all the dev [agents] rose against the Luminaries; he saw [the] Sky, [which he showed to them spiritually, as it was not produced material] with malicious intent he made and on rush, [drew the Sky, which was at the Star station, down towards the void which, as I have written at the commencement, was under the base of the Luminaries and the Planets, so that] he stood [above the Star station,] from within the Sky, [up to] a one third; like a serpent, he [forthwith wished] to drag the Sky underneath the Earth [and to break it]; he entered, in the month of Frawardin, and the day of Ohrmazd, at noon; the Sky was as afraid of him as a sheep of a wolf; he, then, came to the Water, [which I have said] was arranged underneath this Earth; he, then, pierced and entered the middle of this Earth. (...) Dozakh [“Hell”] is in the middle of the Earth, there where through the Evil Spirit entered, having pierced the Earth; as, over all the elements of the material world, a transformation to duality, opposition, combat, and mingling of high and low became manifest” (4:10, 28). This fall takes place after the the first man (*Gayomard* – Pahlavi, literally “mortal life”) was created in Zoroastrian tradition. Since then *Ahriman* appears to be trapped in the lowest hell, the huge hole in the earth or abyss formed at the moment of his fall; most probably he was then chained as a prisoner and frozen in the ice. The fall of Lucifer and his later status in the lowest hell will re-appear later in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* with strikingly similar details.

There are several texts, obviously closely related to Persian sources on the fall of Satan (Judeo-Persian *Bereshit-nāmāh*) and “The Book of Genesis” on the fall of Azazel, also referred as *Iblīs* and *Shaytān* in the same text³²⁸.

³²⁸ For more detail see: Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther’s Garden*, 31-38. Interestingly, a 4th century CE a Jewish Haggadah provides an account of Satan’s fall – Alice Turner, *The History of Hell*, 45.

Figure 4. Fall of Lucifer. Gustave Doré's illustration for *Paradise Lost* by John Milton



The fall of Satan is retold in the contexts of extended pseudepigraphic demonology. Modified names of Satan and different explanations for his punishment are described there. Let me mention some of these.

According to Shaked, *Ashmedai* (Hebrew *Ashmeday* // Greek *Asmodaios*), a figure that frequently is referred to in Jewish Apocrypha (the *Book of Tobit*, the *Testament of Solomon*) and rabbinic Talmud and Midrash, is one of the oldest borrowings of an Iranian religious term (*Aēšma daēva*, „demon of wrath”) in Jewish writings³²⁹.

Enochic *Samyaza* (also *Shemihazah*) is another term for Satan (“infamous rebellion”, the combination of Hebrew “shem” or “name”, “fame” + “azaz” – “rebellion” or “arrogance” or literally meaning “*My name has seen*”), originally the most powerful angel in heaven who sinned by rebelling against God. In the Book of Enoch, the leader *Samyaza* and his angels followers (“sons of heaven” – Aramaic *bnei shmia*, “the Watchers” - Aramaic *eriin*, the fallen angels) are said to be punished severely in hell (imprisonment of the rebellious angels) for the fornicating with women (“*the daughters of men*”) while defiling the land and teaching forbidden knowledge sorcery, astrology, various forms of magic, etc. to their progenies (“*the Giants*”): “*And the Lord said unto Michael: “Go, bind Semjâzâ and his associates who have united themselves with women so as to have defiled themselves with them in all their uncleanness. And when their sons have slain one another, and they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them fast for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth³³⁰, till the day of their judgement and of their consummation, till the judgement that is for ever and ever is consummated. In those days they shall be led off to the abyss of fire: (and) to the torment and the prison in which they shall be confined for ever. And whosoever shall be condemned and destroyed will from thenceforth be bound together with them to the end of all generations.”* (1 Enoch 10:11-13; translation by R.H.Charles).

Mentioned angels were not only cast out of heaven, but cast into “Tartarus” and chained. In 2 Peter 2:4 we read: “*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.*”

³²⁹ Shaul Shaked, „Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia,” in: *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*. No.21 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 108.

³³⁰ Possibly, inside mountains – Charles supposes this to refer to Greek myths of the Titans hurled down to *Tartarus* (titans as a synonym for “titanic”, gigantic size - APOT, 194), although modern scholars tend to think even this Greek notion may have been borrowed from some Near Eastern pattern, most probably of Babylonian origin.

While Jude presents this motif:

“And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home: these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day” (Jude 1:6, KJV).

In the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Satan is mentioned to be bound in chains (chapter 24).

The imprisonment of *Dahak* (*Azi Dahak* or *Zohak*) chained inside Mount *Dāmavand* in earlier Zoroastrian parallels this (see Bundahišn 29:9, etc.).

Thus Qur’an revisits the motif of fall of Satan (*Iblis*): *„It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels prostrate to Adam, and they prostrate; not so Iblis (Lucifer); He refused to be of those who prostrate.”* (Allah) said: *“What prevented thee from prostrating when I commanded thee?”* He said: *“I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire, and him from clay”* (Qur’an 7:11-12).

Muslim tradition has altogether more than 7 references to this motif in Quran³³¹, while one of Muslim cosmogonical legends (*Qisas* 3, line 10) quoted by Asin, clearly states: *“Immediately after their division God sent an angel from His throne, who, falling upon the earth, penetrated the seven strata thereof and there remained, sustaining them upon his shoulders, with one hand stretched towards the East and the other towards the West, his feet lacking all support.”*³³² This myth is widely reflected in pseudepigraphic *Life of Adam and Eve* traditions.

As pointed out already, in Zoroastrianism, the fall of a sinner off the *Chinvat bridge* into the hell below is depicted in a headlong, headdown position³³³ (Bundahišn 30:12; Dadestan i Denig, 20:4; 25:6; 34:4). This is an interesting technical peculiarity characteristic of Zoroastrian tradition.

³³¹ Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 110.

³³² *Ibid.*, 111.

³³³ I have included a reproduced copy of a Byzantine icon of *the Heavenly Ladder of St John Klimakos from Sinai* (Constantinople, the best known depiction of the heavenly ladder) dated the late 12th century and preserved in the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine in Sinai, believed to be the oldest continuously operating Christian (Orthodox) monastery in the world established in the 6th century, lying at the foot of Mt. Sinai. It depicts monks ascending the heavenly ladder accompanied by hosts of angels and wicked demons attacking and dragging sinners with spears and other weapons headdown into hell (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Byzantine icon of the Heavenly Ladder of St John Klimakos from Sinai. The late 12th century



AWN has a reference to sinners punished in a position headdown as most often mentioned in the category of hanging punishments (37:1-7; 69:1-10; 74:1-5; 80:1-7; 88:1-7). This is how unhospitable are punished: *“Then I saw the souls of those who were fallen, headlong, into hell; and smoke and heat were driven upon them from below, and a cold wind from above.*

And I asked thus: “What sin was committed by these bodies, whose souls suffer so severe a punishment?”

Srosh the pious, and Adar the angel, said thus: “These are the souls of those who, in the world, gave no place, nor caravanserai for travellers, nor lodging, nor space, nor baking oven; or who gave them, and took hire for them.” (AWN 93:16).

Confusions with puzzling peculiarities in spatial dimensions as part of a mystical journey or directions within afterlife are popular in Kabbalistic (the *hekhalot*) texts and pseudepigraphic tradition. An ascent/descent motif appears there in visions or visionary experiences reported to happen whether in heaven or hell; the heavenly ascent of a vision described in terms of “*the descent to the merkavah (yordey merkavah or the descent to the holy Chariot)*”³³⁴ is the most paradoxical in this regard. We can refer to a modern double-spiral sculptural stair designed in Germany as to an approximate sample of context’s schematic depiction (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Project of double-spiral sculptural stair case outside KPMG in Munich



Stroumsa suggests a Hellenistic background of this mystical metaphor, and states that it is incapable to express a mystic experience in a straightforward language, therefore ascent

³³⁴ Most of primary studies have been done by pioneering scholar in Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem followed by Moshe Idel, but a consensus on interpretation of this perplexed metaphor and its original meaning has not been reached and resolved. More on this – *Himmelfarb, M. Ascent.* p. 108.

or descent metaphors are simpler than more complex contexts of *going inside* or interiorization³³⁵.

Similar concept is presented in Pseudepigrapha: 1) text of 2 Enoch (Chapter 10: hell is located at the Northern side of heavenly Paradise (“*the paradise of Eden*” 8:6) and includes such elements as cruel darkness, merciless torturing angels, cold and ice. The place of punishment for the sinners is located in the heavenly Paradise (Aramaic - *pardesa kušta*) in the third heaven; 2) text of 3 Baruch: (Slavonic version 16:4-8); Greek version locates *Hades* in the third heaven, too (4:3, 6; 5:3). John Collins explains this as a result of the not universally followed model of Hellenistic cosmology that locates *Hades* in the heavens as there is no place for the Netherworld³³⁶. We will once again encounter similar paradoxical spatial dimensional descriptions when we consider Dante’s Comedy.

1.5.3. Noxious creatures.

Noxious creatures were quite often referred to. *Bundahišn* (Zoroastrian Book of Creation), a ninth-century Pahlavi text, mentions them (Pahlavi *khrafstras khrafstars*, also, *kharvastars*) in a term of possibly unclear etymology meaning “wild”, “monstrous” (like little devils). Also Zoroastrian *Greater Bundahišn* has a chapter on noxious creatures (22:1-29). First of all, Zoroastrianism distinguishes the animals of the Good and Evil creation. As we saw earlier, the first were created by *Ohrmazd* while the last by *Ahriman*.

AWN mentions various *khrafstras* as torturing creatures that execute punishment on sinners (17:12; 24:3; 27:1-7; 29:1-6; 30:1-5; 34:1-7; 37:1-7; 38:1-7, etc.). They are described thus: “*even the lesser noxious creatures are as high as mountains, and they so tear and seize and worry the souls of the wicked, as would be unworthy of a dog*³³⁷” (18:12-13). The smallest of the *xrafstars* are pictured there as big as mountains. It is worth to note that in *hadith* traditions of later Muslim sources (not to be differentiated in detail here) demons

³³⁵ G.G. Stroumsa, “Mystical Descents,” in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, eds. John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p.140, 145 -148.

³³⁶ John Collins, “The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature”, 133-134.

³³⁷ Russian translation reders this more precisely: “...and they so tear and seize and worry the souls of the sinners, as a dog would do to a bone” – *Пехлевийская Божественная Комедия*, 110.

(angels and *shayatin* or satans) are often present at punishment scenes: unbelievers (unbeliever – *kafir*) in the Fire (*Jahannam*) are attacked by enormous snakes (with „*necks like camels*”) and scorpions („*as large as mules*”, occurring often as born out of the Fire)³³⁸.

Khrafstras in Zoroastrian sources are poisonous and harmful creatures, otherwise translated as *venomous creatures*³³⁹.

Khrafstras are mentioned alongside with *devs*, also in AWN (28:1-6; 31:1-7; 41:1-8, etc.). *Daeva* or *dev* is a demon (*daevic* can be rendered precisely as demonic) referred to in contexts related to the destructive part of creation. *Devs* were also shaped by the Evil Spirit *Ahriman* (Middle Persian). *Ahriman* himself is a source of death, and it brings uncleanness onto the whole body of the deceased³⁴⁰. There are several demons at the *Chinvat* bridge who appear to kill the soul and the body of a person on its way to afterlife such as *Vīzaresha* (*Vizārsh*) (Vendidad 19:29), *Astō-vīdhātu* and *Vayu* (Vendidad 5:8-9)³⁴¹. In the 9th century C.E., Zoroastrian tractate *Mainyo-i-Khard* (“Book of the Judgments of the Spirit of Wisdom”) and state that one is served the most unpleasant (disgusting) food in hell such as venom, poison, snakes, scorpions, and “*other khrafstars that are in hell*”.

We may now pose several questions: when did a „noxious creature” or creatures appear in descriptions of executing most severe punishments to the sinners? What are the particular texts in the context of hell punishment where no such creatures are mentioned and vice versa, what are the texts that refer to the “noxious creature”?

It seems that torturing creatures as executioners that inflict permanent ways of punishment appear and assist in the cases of committed double, triple or complex sins. I wonder, if we may concern the certain graduation of sins by their significance. For example, a woman is suspended by breasts and noxious creatures seize the whole of her body because she had: 1) left her own husband, and 2) given herself to other men, and committed adultery (AWN 24:1-7; 25:1-6). However, there are pieces of text where there a tem “they” is used without a clear statement of a particular executor (for example, AWN 20:2; 21:1-2; 22:2; 27:2; 30:2). I.e., the torturing angels could be meant as well. However, AWN 37:3 mentions

³³⁸ Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire*, 118, 120.

³³⁹ Mitra Ara, *Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Traditions*, 207.

³⁴⁰ Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1990), 65. Further referred as TSSZ (see list of abbreviations).

³⁴¹ Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 12.

snakes and scorpions³⁴² as torturers and then an addition follows: “*and other noxious creatures (khrafstars)*”. The above makes us think that not necessarily angels are implied in all torturing cases. These are Ahrimanic animals which include snakes, lizards, scorpions and other demonic creatures including reptiles and wild animals since there is a general idea in Zoroastrian texts that evil spirit brings contamination whenever present and to which substance it comes in contact. Russian translation of the terminus technicus of *khrafstar* provides a clearer rendering as *вредные существа* („harmful creatures”). In *Dadestan I Denig* these creatures are mentioned to appear when the flesh of a dead body begins to decay (17:3). This most probably points to various scavengers with the exception of birds of prey looking for carrion; specifically vultures (cf. 17:3).

Shaul Shaked points out serpents, scorpions, wolves and other noxious creatures to be used frequently on Sasanian seals of Christian iconographic usage; however, the attitude of Zoroastrian orthodoxy to these exclusive symbols of evil and impurity remains unclear³⁴³. Antonio Panaino researched Zoroastrian magical texts revealing magic techniques and formulas (namely, invocations against demonic beings) from Sasanian period and mentioned the tradition of killing *xrafstras*, the demoniac animals, the snakes and serpents being the worst of all³⁴⁴. The magi are reported by Herodotus to be following a custom of killing ants, snakes, and other creeping and flying things³⁴⁵. Frogs, and wolves were amongst these, too.

According to Gherardo Gnoli, *xrafstars* were a part of invisible creation (Pahlavi *mēnōg*) of maleficent spiritual power³⁴⁶. Hinnels explains this notion as based upon one Pahlavi creation account, thus: “*evil had produced such potent and deadly forces that if they had remained in unseen form they would have proved particularly deadly, and therefore*

³⁴² These as well as other living creatures (birds of prey [i.e., vultures], dogs, wolves, various bugs and beetles, flies, worms, toads, lizards, tortoises and frogs) who can possibly become the medium for spreading uncleanness of a dead body or dead matter. However it is clearly stated that contact with these doesn't make man sinful (Vendidad 5:3-4; see TSSZ, 65.).

³⁴³ Shaul Shaked, “Jewish and Christian Seals of the Sasanian period,” reprint from *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet* (Jerusalem, Institute of Asian and African Studies, 1977), 22.

³⁴⁴ A. Panaino, “Lunar and Snake Omens among the Zoroastrians,” in *OFFICINA MAGICA* Vol.4., Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity, ed. S.Shake (Leiden-Boston: BRILL, 2005), 75.-76., 77.

³⁴⁵ Gherardo Gnoli, *Evil in Ancient Iranian Religions* - See <http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/cosmology/evil.htm>

³⁴⁶ Gherardo Gnoli, op.cit.

Ohrmazd ordered it so that they took on visible and tangible form”³⁴⁷. The *Bundahišn* often refers to the “noxious creatures”, but in what contexts?

Any animal capable of killing or cruelty is defined as evil and malefactory *khrafstars*³⁴⁸. Flies (spreading dead matter), snakes, scorpions, toads, wolves and lions fall under this category. The presence of scorpions and snakes in hell is mentioned in Jewish *Haggadah*³⁴⁹ since the 4th century CE.

In most cases (usually in AWN), noxious creatures are described as executing judgement by constantly gnawing bodies of sinners.

All the functions in afterlife topography are filled by the images of various angelic or demonic creatures, including guarding angels, evil angels, etc.

In Pseudepigraphal tradition, various hell punishments are administered by the *angels of punishment*. They appear as executors of punishments. It seems that the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch) appears to be the first Pseudepigraphal source to use this specific *terminus technicus*.

There are fiery dogs, serpents, vipers, angels, etc. mentioned as present in hell in the Ethiopic Apocalypse of Baruch (see Table 2). Torturing worms, beasts and angels are referred to in Pseudepigrapha. Himmelfarb concludes – „*it is impossible to know whether the ordinary worms are influenced by the Bible or are simply the natural companions of death*”³⁵⁰. In regard to various animals as tormenters in hell (snakes, birds, dogs, etc.), Himmelfarb suggests a direct non-Christian or ancient Egyptian influence, but doesn't elaborate more on a particular source of influence³⁵¹. However, we should object to prove a possibility to search for the origins of this idea in rich Zoroastrian textual tradition as could be seen from various examples above.

³⁴⁷ J.R.Hinnells, *Persian Mythology* (London: The Library of the World's Myths and Legends, 1997), 56.

³⁴⁸ J.R.Hinnells, op.cit., 56.

³⁴⁹ Alice Turner, *The History of Hell*, 45.

³⁵⁰ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 117, 119.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

Table 2. Worms, beasts and angels in tours of hell analysed by Himmelfarb

Text	Isaianic Worm	Worms	Snakes	Lions	Dogs	Vipers/ Scorpions/ Reptiles	Beasts	Others	Angels of Torment
Apoc. Pet. (Eth.)	pl., 1	1	—	—	—	—	2	1	2
Apoc. Pet. (Gk.)	pl., 1	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
Acts Th.	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Apoc. Zeph.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Apoc. Paul	1	3	—	—	—	1	1	—	3
Eth. Apoc. Mary	—	1	2	1	1	1	—	1	6
Eth. Apoc. Bar.	—	—	2	—	2	1	—	—	1
Apoc. Gorg.	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	4
Gk. Apoc. Mary	2	1	—	—	—	—	5	—	—
Apoc. Ezra	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Vis. Ezra	1	—	1	2	2	—	1	—	4
T. Isaac	pl., 1	—	—	1	1	—	—	3	—
L. Pach.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Dar. Tesh.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Isa. frag.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Josh. frag.	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ged. Mosh.	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
Elij. frag.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Striking is the idea of torturing angels (*malakhey-habal*, „angels of destruction”, „angels of infliction”) depicted as angels (but not precisely cruel demons!) to injure sinners to provide a divine punishment (this idea is strange to Biblical worldview including New Testament apocalyptic accounts in Apocalypse of John). 1 Enoch is known for the use of the term „angels of destruction” (40:7; 53:3; 56:1; 62:11; 63:1; cf. 2 Enoch 10:3; 5). Indeed it is frequently paralleled with the „watchers” (*‘erīm*, *‘erīm shamayim*). Most probably the term is identic to „immortals” and „wakeful” but not „watchmen” and „guards”³⁵² or the angels fallen from heaven as a consequence of divine rebellion. All in all, the above allows to suggest a strong Iranian background of Enoch traditions, still embeded in general Hellenistic scheme. Ida Fröhlich suggests 1 Enoch, having a proved and immense popularity also in Qumran community, to be rightfully a composition of the Mesopotamian Jewish tradition³⁵³. Himmelfarb suggests the influence of Greek ideas yet again doesn’t demonstrate it in detail³⁵⁴. „Angels of destruction” are a part of evil realm of Satan in the Book of Enoch, appointed to inflict the divine punishment (form of punishments is not specified) on sinners (namely, those who scorn the Law) in the flames of *Gehinnom*³⁵⁵.

³⁵² Louis Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect*, Studies in Jewish History, Literature and Thought, Moreshet Series, Vol.I (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 5736-1976), 170.

³⁵³ Ida Fröhlich, *Time and Times and Half a Time*, 52.

³⁵⁴ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 121.

³⁵⁵ Louis Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect*, 169.

Martha Himmelfarb, following an established scholarly debate, with a certain probability traces the tradition of *the angels of torture* (termed variously as torturing angels; tormenting angels; angels of torment; angels of punishment) in the-tours-of-hell type literature, a tradition not to be considered Hebrew by its origin, but leading back to antiquity, classical literature and Greek ideas³⁵⁶. 1 Enoch is one of the sources in the chain of texts of this tradition, since mentions angels of punishment several times. It is interesting to note, that the Apocalypse of Peter (2nd century CE) is a non-canonical Christian text that develops a new class of angels, not mentioned in the Bible. These creatures are mentioned also in Jewish midrash *Gedulat Moshe* as we will see later³⁵⁷. In respect to Book of Enoch, a long scholarly debate has been conducted in relation to Iran, namely, Zoroastrian beliefs. Iranian influence on essenes and gnostics is obvious in its dualism³⁵⁸.

The angels of punishment are generally very prominent in Medieval literature as the executors of judgement. Fallen angels guard the city of Dis, the lowest part of Dante's Hell. Accounts of very severe punishments are available in two obviously Christian texts: the Apocalypse of Peter and the Apocalypse of Paul. Various names of these angels are mentioned, i.e. Ezrael (angel of wrath) and angel Tatiroskos (ethymologically related to *Tartarus*) in the Apocalypse of Peter³⁵⁹ and *Tataruchus* or angel of *Tartarus* as a guardian of hell prison in the Apocalypse of Paul³⁶⁰. *Aftemelouchos* is an angel of punishments³⁶¹. Theodore Silverstein believes similar motifs reached Western Europe particularly through the Acts of Thomas³⁶².

1.5.4. Direction: North

As we saw earlier, spatial locations of hell may seem confusing in various texts on afterlife. For example, in Chapter 32 of the Apocalypse of Paul Chapter, hell is located in the

³⁵⁶ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 121.

³⁵⁷ According to Richard Bauckham, *Gedulat Moshe*, the *Apocalypse of Paul*, *3 Baruch* (Slavonic) and the Syriac *Transitus Mariae* are coming from the same genre and develop basically the same pattern – an ascent to the seven heavens is followed by a visits to paradise and hell – Alan Segal, *Life After Death*, 487-488.

³⁵⁸ Дж.Б.Рассел, *Дьявол*, 141.

³⁵⁹ Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 287.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 294

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 299, 282.-305. See also Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, 58.

³⁶² Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, 70.

North, yet in Chapter 42 it is referred as towards the West. In Ethiopian and Greek Apocalypse of Mary, the Holy Virgin travels West, South and then to the left side of paradise located opposite to the East. In *Gedulat Moshe*, there is no geographical location of hell at all, indeed the text refers to hell's downwards direction. The structure of hell may appear in most confusing forms resembling patterns of surrealist art or non-directional evolving staircases (Figure 6) revealed by subconsciousness from sphere of dreams.

AWN and most other Zoroastrian texts dedicated to afterlife refer to an exceptionally spatial and demonical location of hell in the North or regions in the north. „The North” is a metaphorical equivalent for Hell itself³⁶³.

J. Modi stresses that Northern direction was avoided by all possible means in all Zoroastrian religious ceremonies because this side “*proceeded all kinds of dangers and evils whether climatic, physical or mental*”³⁶⁴. There was a belief, that the winds that blowed from the northern cold regions brought sickness and death to Persia, and that people who lived in northern regions were lacking a lot of moral qualities³⁶⁵.

The wind blowing from the north was generally believed to be stinking (Yasht Fragment, XXII, *Hadokht Nask*, III, 18). On the contrary, the South was favoured, and winds from the South were considered purifactory, healthy, bringing rain and abundance (*Vendidad*, III, 42). Three nights after the death, the soul of a righteous finds itself surrounded by fragrant smells and sweet smelling wind coming from the south.

In *Vendidad* (VII, 2, 5) the spirit of Destruction (*Druj-i-Nasush*) runs from the northern direction in the form of a fly.

It has been suggested that Greek concept of *Tartarus* (earlier *Hades* / equivalent of Jewish of *Gehenna*) located in the far North as the remotest and most distant place apart is based upon the Zoroastrian notion³⁶⁶.

In 2 Enoch³⁶⁷ we do find a striking and exceptionally dramatic description of the place of eternal punishment (at the third heaven): it is located at „the Northern side”, both

³⁶³ See *Hadokht Nask* chapter 3 // see TSSZ, 81-82.

³⁶⁴ J.J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay, 1922), see <http://www.avesta.org/ritual/rcc.htm#chap3>

³⁶⁵ J.J. Modi, op.cit.

³⁶⁶ J.B. Russel, “The Platonic Myth of Er”, 25-26.

fire and „frost and ice”, and „*the angels are fearfull and merciless, bearing angry weapons, merciless torture* (otherwise – „*cruel relentless angels carrying arms and tormenting without mercy*)”...”(10:1-6), therefore all three Zoroastrian elements (the North, frost and ice, cruel angels of punishment) are present in Enoch’s journey description. They have a specific general shape characteristic of Hellenistic cosmology, as hell is generally located in the heavenly regions. A long list of worst sins follows to serve as an explanation for this terrible place of severe punishments: child-corruption after the sodomitic fashion, magic-making, enchantments and demonic witchcrafts, stealing, lies, envy, rancour, fornication, murder, unjustly taking from poor by profiting, practising idolatry.

As for the 1 Enoch 76-77, it mentions seven mountains stretching from the north. Scholars intend to consider it as rather real than mythological geographical description that possibly refers to the Caucasus range in northern Turkey; two rivers flowing from there into the Erythraean Sea being the Tigris and the Euphrates³⁶⁸. 1 Enoch locates *Gehenna*, burning valley, in the West (67:4).

To be noted, Jewish midrash *Otzar Midrashim* („Treasury of Midrashim”) locates *Gehenna* (although fiery hell) in the northern quarter³⁶⁹.

Another interesting fact is that St. Paul visits the northern regions of the earth with the icy branches of hell³⁷⁰.

1.5.5. Cold fire?

It is interesting to note that there is no reference to the hell fire described as cold in biblical texts (not even as heating fire). Indeed, ice was by certainly presented in the Greek and Roman hells³⁷¹. Besides, only the Buddhist hells were divided into the hot and cold hells

³⁶⁷ Richard Bauckham has pointed out that this is a rare survival of an Apocalypse within the genre of tours of the seven heavens including a tour of hell within one of the heavens Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 79.

³⁶⁸ Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 125.

³⁶⁹ Raphael Patai, *Book of Jewish Legends*, 280.

³⁷⁰ Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, 11.

³⁷¹ Alice Turner, *The History of Hell*, 44.

with the varying degrees of cold (*Atata* – “hell of chattering teeth”)³⁷², however these are described in less picturesque details than the hot hells³⁷³.

Although, as one legend puts it, Abraham in the Talmudic text *Tanna debe Eliyyahu* is to be burnt by heat and not flame itself after he is passed away³⁷⁴. Cold fire and wind and the heat not caused by fire were neutral substances. By the way, the clothing belonged to the dead had to be destroyed as well, indeed not by the people but rather „by the combined action of heat, air, and rain”³⁷⁵. In Bombay (India), there was a custom to destroy this clothing by sulphuric acid³⁷⁶.

AWN contains continuous references to the „stinking cold wind” that blows forward from the northern quarter of Hell (17:12). Righteous Wirāz describes approaching the entrance to hell (once again, it is conceived as a breakthrough of a deep and narrow well; elsewhere in Zoroastrian texts described as *arzūr grīvāk* or „mount Arezūr”, a crater of an active volcano³⁷⁷) as “I beheld cold and heat, drought and stench, to such a degree as I never saw, nor heard of, in the world” (18:3-4). Thus, cold and heat are referred as intermingled opposites. Hell fire as an enduring punishment would be inconceivable for Zoroastrians.

Further on, we should note that there is no mention of torture of cold in hell in Biblical texts. Miguel Asin points, that according to Islamic concept, this torture was ranked equal to the torture by fire; afterwards the torture of cold was acknowledged even more painful due to the assimilation of a specific Zoroastrian belief³⁷⁸.

Martha Himmelfarb’s observation is that a term „fire” in early apocalyptic literature is more common than *Gehinnom*; yet it represents a valley or pit of fire for torture³⁷⁹. Term „Gehinnom” appears to be never mentioned in Qumran texts while the concept itself is developed extensively in the New Testament³⁸⁰. Greek conceptions of underworld are fond of rivers of fiery *Hades*. Quran alludes to hell torture of cold vaguely (Quran 76:13, 113:4, Arab. *zamharir*, literally „great cold”, “piercing cold”, „severe frost”, term interpreted most

³⁷² Eileen Gardiner, see <http://www.hell-on-line.org/AboutAB.html>

³⁷³ Карл Клемен, *Жизнь мертвых в религиях человечества* (Москва: «Интрада», 2002), 154.

³⁷⁴ James R. Russel, „Our father Abraham and the Magi,” 228.

³⁷⁵ J.J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies*, <http://www.avesta.org/ritual/rcc.htm#chap3>

³⁷⁶ J.J. Modi, op.cit., <http://www.avesta.org/ritual/rcc.htm#chap3>

³⁷⁷ Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 80.

³⁷⁸ Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 106-107.

³⁷⁹ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 110.

³⁸⁰ Martha Himmelfarb, op.cit., 110.

often as a frozen lake where a sinner/unbeliever suffers intense cold); yet later traditions consider the torture by intense cold as more severe and painful form of punishment than heat torture³⁸¹. Miguel Asin's opinion is relied upon several 9th and 10th century Zoroastrian theologians; he proposes cold fire to be an assimilated form of direct Zoroastrian belief where fire was considered sacred, and therefore an execution should be maintained by icy wind and frozen water instead³⁸².

When we consider Jewish Medieval texts, one may find out that they generally refer to the combined tortures of fire and cold. In Judeo-Persian Midrash on the Ascension of Moses, the hero is led through the sections of hell; in the fifth, he notices several male sinners punished for affairs with married women and prostitutes; they committed idolatry, theft, incest, and bloodshed. They are seen “with half of their bodies on fire, the other half frozen from morning till night” (cf. *Gedulat Moshe* Recension A - 46-48; see also *Baraita de Massechet Gehinnom* v.2 where the torture by half fire and half hail or ice is mentioned, the place is called *Sheol*). When the night had come the half-burnt were frozen and indeed the half-frozen were burnt to increase their torment³⁸³. The name of this hell section is *Abaddon*³⁸⁴ (*Gedulat Moshe* Recension A – 49³⁸⁵). In *Orhot Hayim*, every Shabbat eve the sinners (from all the compartments of hell?) are led out to two mountains of snow where they are left until the end of Shabbat and then are taken back to their former places of torture (v.20; cf. *Masekhet Gehinnom* 3:7³⁸⁶). Instead of being a severe form of punishment, the snow here is considered as a cooler place apart from heating hell where one can repose. Some sinners are said to steal and hide snow inside hell for the rest of the week (v.20). Jewish text *Baraita de Massechet Gehinnom* v.2 says: “God created seven hells, in each are seven compartments, in each compartment there are seven rivers of fire and seven of hail (ice), the width of each is 100 cubits, its depth 1000 cubits, and its length 300 cubits, and

³⁸¹ Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 106-107.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 107.

³⁸³ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 193.

³⁸⁴ *Abaddon* (Hebrew lit. “the place of destruction”) - the realm of the dead, associated with *Sheol* (Job 26:6; Proverbs 15:11). *Abaddon* is also one of the compartments of *Gehenna* according to Medieval Jewish visionary midrashim, by extension, it can mean an underworld abode of lost souls. In some legends, as we will see, it is identified as a realm where the damned lie in fire and snow, one of the places in Hell that Moses visited.

³⁸⁵ Moses Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folk-Lore, Magic, Romances, Apocrypha*. Vol.1. (London: Maggs Bros., 1925-1928), 137.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 157; Simcha Paul Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 178.

they flow one after the other, and all the sinners pass through them and are burned, but the 40,000 angels of destruction who preside over them revive them and raise them on their feet and announce to them their deeds which were evil, and their ways which were crooked,” and they say to them, “Pass now through the rivers of fire and hail and snow, just as you passed over and transgressed the law and the commandments which were given unto you on Mount Sinai, for you feared not the fire of hell and the punishment of Abaddon. Now render account of your deeds!”³⁸⁷. Thus abusers of the poor are punished: “He showed me further men who are thrown from fire to snow, and from snow to fire; these were they that abused the poor who came to them for assistance; therefore are they thus punished, as it is said, “You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water” (Masekhet Gehinnom 2:4³⁸⁸).

Medieval Jewish tractate “*Masekhet Hibbut Ha-Kever*” (“Tractate of the Pangs of the Grave”) reports the strict measure-for-measure punishment of sinners: “*They [i.e., the ministering angels] bring a chain of iron, half of it burning like fire, half as cold as ice, and they beat him with it. At the first stroke his limbs get separated; at the second, his bones are scattered. Then the ministering angels gather them together, and restoring him, beat him a third time, and demand of him an account and reckoning, and judge him measure for measure.*” (v 2³⁸⁹).

To finalise this part, let me once more emphasize that torture inside or by ice and snow is primarily a Zoroastrian concept since fire appears to be forbidden as a medium for punishment, accordingly there is no imagery connected to fire in AWN. According to the later Muslim texts, although in general more focused on fiery hell, the intense cold is considered as more severe and painful form of punishment (see Tables 13, 14). And finally, Jewish Medieval texts use combined tortures of fire and cold where the latter normally would imply a temporal repose from punishment (especially, on Shabbat). Two visionary Christian apocalypses mentioned already: the Apocalypse of Paul and Apocalypse of Peter refer to the imagery connected to torments of cold. The place of torments is called “*a place of ice and snow*” in *Apocalypse of Peter* (39b³⁹⁰), where people (both men and women) who harmed

³⁸⁷ Moses Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folk-Lore*, 161.

³⁸⁸ Simcha Paul Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 177.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

³⁹⁰ Turner Alice, *The History of Hell*, 87.

orphans, widows and poor are punished by worms who sever and consume sinners' hands and feet. Paul sees men and women frozen in snow; they sinned by a denial of the resurrection of Christ and of the flesh (42a³⁹¹). The New Testament phrase “*gnashing of teeth*” is presented in the text and explained as due to immense cold despite the fires³⁹². The entire Apocalypse of Paul, written in a distinctive Persian style with Christian interpolations, includes many of previously encountered elements of Zoroastrian infernal imagery³⁹³.

³⁹¹ Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 301.

³⁹² Alan E. Bernstein, *op.cit.*, 301.

³⁹³ Turner Alice, *The History of Hell*, 87.

2. Distinctive Jewish elements in regard to hell punishments.

2.1. General Imagery of Hell.

The following exposition will deal in detail with specific techniques of hell punishments in some of earlier Jewish Pseudepigrapha (where necessary) and Medieval Jewish visionary texts: *Orot Hayyim* (Tractate “Lights of Life”), *Gedulat Moshe* (“The Revelation of Moses”) and its modifications including the “Ascension of Moses” (Judeo-Persian version of Hebrew midrash, originally known as ‘*Aliyat Moshe le-marom*, “Moses Ascension on High”), *Otzar Midrashim* (“Treasury of Midrashim”), *Masekhet Gehinnom* (“Tractate of Hell”), *Gan Eden ve Gehinnom* (Tractate “Garden of Eden and Hell”).

In general, earlier biblical concepts are preserved in the texts in a transformed way („developments within”). Such terms as *Sheol*, *Gehinnom*, *Abaddon* („Perdition”), *Beer Shahat* („Well of Ruination”), *Bor Shaon* („Tumultuous Pit”), *Tit haYaven* („Miry Clay”), *Duma* („Silence”), and *Bor Tahtiyot* („The Lowest Earth”) appear as attributes or compartments of hell. It should be reminded, that within the biblical period most of them were conceived just as various metaphorical terms for describing the existence of death and hereafter, although these terms remained quite vague.

In brief, during the biblical period, death was commonly associated with a water cistern (Hebrew *bōr*), thus deceased were referred as „*those who descend down to water cistern*” (*yordē bōr*: Ps. 28:1; 30:4; 88:5; 143:7; Proverbs 1:12; Isaiah 14:15; 38:18; Ezech. 26:20; 31:14, 16; 32:18, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30). Sheol itself was conceived as a large *bōr* full of water. Thus, a term for the whole of Underworld *Bor Tahtiyot* („*the deepest water cistern*”, also: „*the deepest well*”, for example, Ps.88:7; Lamentations 3:55; *eretz tahtiyot* or „*The Lowest Land*” is also a common term: Ps. 63:10; 71:20; 139:15; Isaiah. 44:23; Ezech. 26:20; 31:14, 16, 18; 32:18, 24) was used frequently. *Beer Shahat* („Well of Ruination”) was a term closely related to violent death experiences such as a water well and a *shahat*, a trap for catching wild animals (see Job 17:14; 33:18, 22, 24, 28, 30; Ps. 16:10; 30:10; 49:10; 55:24; 103:4; Isaiah 38:17; Ezech. 28:8; Jona 2:7), a latter one was supposed to change its meaning to a pit of grave where victim was ruined. *Bor Shaon* („Tumultuous Pit”) is a very rare term used in allegorical sense in Psalm 40:3; most likely, it resembles a deep and hollow sound

(roaring?) heard inside *bōr*. *Tit haYaven* („Miry Clay”) is another term from the same Psalm connected to the experience of sinking (Psalm 40:3). *Duma* („Silence”, Ps.94:17; 115:17) and *eretẓ tzalmāvet* („the Land of Shadows of Death”) is another poetical term for Underworld (Job 10:21; 38:17; Isaiah 9:1). Term *Shaarei Mavet* („Gates of Death”, Ps. 9:14; 107:18; Job 38:17) is also biblical; however, perhaps *Shaarei Tzalmavet* („Gates of Shadow of Death”) is an extension of biblical reference of Underworld as *eretẓ tzalmavet* („The Land of Shadow of Death”: Isaiah 9:1; Jeremiah 2:6; Job 10:21) because we don't find it in biblical texts. This in brief is an etymological excursus³⁹⁴ that allows us to move further.

2.2. Spatial and temporal measurements.

Enoch who was led by angel Raphael to view hell (named „*the hollow places*”, four in total) states that dead will stay in *Sheol* until the day of Judgement (1 Enoch 22:4, 11). *Gehenna* in 1 Enoch is pictured as „*a deep valley*” with burning fire and the angels of punishment who execute penalties with the instruments of Satan – „*iron chains of immeasurable weight*” (54:3). Similar, but more elaborated measurement of chains of the angels of destruction is provided in Jewish text „The Revelation of Moses” (*Gedulat Moshe* (Recension A)): „*fiery chains [...which] length is 500 years' journey*” (v.47)³⁹⁵. Interestingly, Paradise is precisely measured by angels (1 Enoch 61:1-3). Judeo-Persian Ascension of Moses measure of hell is described in length as „*three hundred years' walk*” and its width defined as „*three hundred years' walk*”³⁹⁶. This means that hell is imagined in a shape of a cube, to be precise. On the other hand, paradise is measured to a distance of „*five hundred years' walk*”³⁹⁷. According to Jewish *Otzar Midrashim*, travelling through hell would imply time span which „*distance is 104 year's journey*”³⁹⁸.

³⁹⁴ For more on this please refer to my early work - Valts Apinis, *Nāve un apbedīšanas tradīcijas Vecajā Derībā* (Riga: Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia, 2000). Unpublished text. In addition, very useful and critical reference is found at Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969).

³⁹⁵ Moses Gaster, *Studies and texts in Folk-lore*, 137. We will meet similar measurements of chains in Muslim tradition.

³⁹⁶ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 191.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

³⁹⁸ Raphael Patai, *Book of Jewish Legends: Gates to the Old City* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), 281.

BHM (*Orhot Hayim*) also specifies precise proportions of hell: *Gehenna* is „a thousand times thousand seven hundred and five years” large; consequently it would take 1,705,000 years to pass from one end to the other³⁹⁹. The full size of *Gehenna* is then 2,100 years⁴⁰⁰.

Jewish Medieval tractate *Masekhet Gehinnom* (“Tractate of Hell”) measures Gehinnom as 300 years’ journey in the height, 300 years’ journey in the width, and 300 years’ journey in length which finally reaches up to 6,300 years’ journey in total (*Masekhet Gehinnom*, 5:1-2⁴⁰¹).

As an exception, the tractate *Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and the Seven Compartments of Gehinnom* refers to a hell measured by an appointed angel *Kushiel*: “I went to the angel *Kushiel*, who went with me until I came before the fire at the Gates of Gehinnom. (...) They showed me then a compartment in Gehinnom, which I entered, and, going round it, I measured it.” (v.3⁴⁰²). The first compartment appears to be “one mile in length and breadth” (v.4), the second is of the same size. There is no mention of the size of next 5 compartments in the text.

2.3. Graduation of compartments in hell.

Jewish Medieval visionary midrashim often alludes to various compartments of hell. Many of them later established biblical names and implied extensions of earlier topography of hereafter. As we saw, the book of Enoch, is the first one in the line to divide hell in compartments. BHM mentions 7 compartments of *Gehenna*. Various titles are used for hell in Medieval visionary midrashim. *Masekhet Gehinnom* encounters 7 compartments of *Gehenna* by their various titles: *Sheol* (Hades), *Abaddon* („Perdition”), *Beer Shahat* („Well of Ruination”), *Bor Shaon* („Tumultuous Pit”), *Tit haYaven* („Miry Clay”), *Duma* („Silence”), *Eretz Tahtiyot* („the Lowest Earth”) with their various sizes (see Table 3.). All of the above appear to be extensions of original biblical concepts.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁴⁰⁰ Raphael Patai, *op.cit.*, 277.

⁴⁰¹ Simcha Paul Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 180. cf. The same measures of hell are given in *Judeo-Persian Ascension of Moses*

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 182.

Table 3. Compartments of hell with corresponding sizes according to *Otzar Midrashim*, (compare with Table 5.)

Title of Gehenna compartment	Literal meaning of the term	Corresponding measurement	Corresponding punishment
<i>Sheol (Hades)</i>	—	300 years' journey	Korah and community
<i>Abaddon</i>	„Perdition”	300 years' journey	souls of the wicked
<i>Beer Shahat</i>	„Well of Ruination”	300 years	robbers and thieves
<i>Bor Shaon</i>	„Tumultuous Pit”	—	—
<i>Tit haYaven</i>	„Miry Clay”	300 years	those who commit incest
<i>Duma</i>	„Silence”	300 years	those who envy the sages
<i>Eretz Tahtijot</i>	„The Lowest Earth”	300 years	Jews opposed to the sages

Bor Shaon („Tumultuous Pit”) consists of two wells poured from one to the other, but never filled⁴⁰³. *Gehenna* holds 7 houses of punishment with appointed figures (see Table 4.).

Jewish Medieval tractate *Masekhet Gehinnom* (“Tractate of Hell”) constructs its own division of hell compartments (Heb. *madorei*, from *madura*, “a fireplace, fire”) on rabbinic teachings of the seven names of *Gehenna*⁴⁰⁴. They are: *Sheol (Hades)*, *Beer Shahat* („Well of Ruination”), *Tit haYaven* („Miry Clay”), *Shaarei Mavet* („Gates of Death”), *Abaddon* („Perdition”), *Shaarei Tzalmavet* („Gates of Shadow of Death”), *Gehinnom* („Fiery Hell”, „Valley of Hinnom”) (see Table 5.). As we see, there are three previously mentioned titles absent: *Bor Shaon*, *Duma* and *Eretz Tahtiyot*.

⁴⁰³ Raphael Patai, *Book of Jewish Legends*, 277.

⁴⁰⁴ Simcha Paul Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 174.

Table 4. Houses of hell according to tractate *Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and the Seven Compartments of Gehinnom* (by S.P.Raphael)

Name	Angel	Inhabitants	Leader
1. Sheol		open pits and fiery lions	
2. Beer Shakhat	Kushiel	ten nations of world	Absalom
3. Tit Ha-Yaven	Shabtil	seven nations of world	Korah and company
4. Shaarei Mavet	Maktiel	four nations of the world	Jeroboam
5. Abbadon	Hushiel	seven nations	Ahab
6. Shaarei Tzalmavet	Parhiel		Micah
7. Gehinnom		six nations of the world	Elisha b. Abuya

The amount of *Gehinnom* is reported: “*There are seven compartments in Gehinnom, and in each of them are 7,000 rooms, in each room 7,000 windows, in each window [recess] there are 7,000 vessels filled with venom, all destined for slanderous writers and iniquitous judges. It is to that that Solomon alludes when he says, “And you mourn at your latter end when your flesh and your body are consumed” (Masekhet Gehinnom, 4:6)⁴⁰⁵. Furthermore, other details are provided: “There are besides in every compartment 7,000 holes [crevices], and in every hole there are 7,000 scorpions. Every scorpion has 300 slits [cavities]: in every slit are 7,000 pouches of venom, and from each of these flow six rivers of deadly poison. When a man touches it, he immediately bursts, ever/ limb is torn from him, his body is cleft asunder, and he falls dead upon his face. The Angels of Destruction collect his limbs, set them aright, and revive the man and place him upon his feet, and take their revenge upon him anew. This takes place in the uppermost compartment, which is called Sheol. The height thereof is 300 years' journey, the width 300 years' journey, and its length the same.*”

The second compartment is Beer Shakhat, of the same height, width, and length. The third is Tit-Hayaven, of equal size. The fourth is Shaarei Mavet, of the same size. The fifth, Abbadon, of the same size. The sixth, Shaarei Tzalmavet, of the same size. The seventh, Gehinnom, of the same size. Thus the length of hell is altogether 6,300 years' journey. [We

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 179.

read further that the tire of Gehinnom is one-sixtieth of the fire of Shaarei Tzalmavet, and so of every consecutive compartment until the fire of Sheol.] *Sheol consists half of fire and half of hail [ice], and when the sinners contained therein emerge from the fire they are tortured by the hail [ice], and when they emerge from the hail [ice] the fire burns them, and the angels who preside over them keep their souls within their bodies. As it is said, "For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched"* (Masekhet Gehinnom, 5:1-2)⁴⁰⁶.

In total, we may observe the following. *Gehinnom* is in a shape of a cube and altogether it would take a journey of 6,300 years long (see Table 5.). Scorpions, deadly poison, the angels of destruction, and finally cold are presented as elements; they resemble Zoroastrian ones.

Table 5. Compartments of hell with corresponding sizes according to *Masekhet Gehinnom*

Title of Gehenna compartment	Literal meaning of the term	Corresponding measurem	Corresponding Punishment
<i>Sheol</i>		300 years' journey	half fire / half ice
<i>Beer Shakhat</i>	„Well of Ruination”	300 years' journey	
<i>Tit-Hayaven</i>	„Miry Clay”	300 years' journey	
<i>Shaarei Mavet</i>	„Gates of Death”	300 years' journey	
<i>Abbadon</i>	„Perdition”	300 years' journey	
<i>Shaarei Tzalmavet</i>	„Gates of Shadow of Death”	300 years' journey	
<i>Gehinnom</i>	„Fiery Hell”	300 years' journey	
TOTAL		6,300 years' journey	

There is an interesting way of punishment mentioned in *Gehinnom*: “Every day the Angel of Death comes and drives them on like cattle from mountain to valley and from valley to mountain, as it is said, “They are sent down to Sheol like sheep; death acts like a shepherd unto them.” *The Angels of Destruction punish the sinners for twelve months in Gehinnom. After twelve months they revive their bodies and lower them to Shaarei Mavet, where they are again punished for twelve months. Then they are lowered into Shaarei Tzalmavet, and after twelve months' punishment they are lowered into Tit-Hayaven, and again after twelve months' punishment they are lowered into Beer Shakhat. Thence, after the same lapse of time, to Abbadon, and finally, after twelve months' punishment, they are lowered then into*

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 180. See also Moses Gaster, *Studies and texts in Folk-lore*, 161.

Sheol” (Masekhet Gehinnom, 5:3)⁴⁰⁷. This is a unique type of punishment as it involves a rotation of twelve months period (the whole punishment in hell reaches 7 x 12 = 84 months altogether) and includes movements from one hell compartment to another (in direction from upper to the lower level). Despite this idea is different than the measure-for-measure principle, it is strictly structured either.

2.4. Details in hell punishments.

Main committed sins are directed against the Torah. Those “*who have violated the whole of the Torah and the precepts and have sinned against the Torah of God, going the idolatrous way of the nations, shall have their bodies and souls burnt. Gehinnom vomits them out, and the north wind scatters them, so that they become ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous, as it is said, 'And on account of the doings of the wicked, behold they shall become ashes beneath your feet on the day when I execute judgment*” (Masekhet Hibbut Ha-Kever 8)⁴⁰⁸.

2.4.1. Hanging punishments. Is there a torturing mechanism?

An excursus has been provided already on hanging punishments in Zoroastrian AWN. This category of hell punishments is typical for Jewish visionary midrashim as well.

The examples that resemble similar form of punishment can be found in biblical texts already. Samson sinned when he followed the seduction of his eyes; and the Philistines plucked them out accordingly (see Judges 16:21, m.Sot.1:8); Absalom got hung by his long hair under the thick branches of a large oak (2 Samuel 18:9, m.Sot.1:8). A principle when the punishment is executed to a certain part of the body with which the sin was committed is mentioned in Talmudic texts: „*Judgement starts with that limb which has committed crime*„ (Sifre Num 18). Rabbis think that according to a principle of divine punishment, the judgement of a woman who committed adultery (see Num. 5) should begin in her sexual organs (Sifre Num 18, sal. m.Sot.1:7). Babylonian Talmud explains this principle in

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 172.

escahtological perspective: „*Man should not let his ears listen to empty rumours, otherwise these will be burned first*” (b.Ket 5b).

According to *Masekhet Hibbut Ha-Kever*, the judgement begins already in the grave (*kever*) and then *Gehinnom* if applicable afterwards. The dead one is prejudged by the ministering angels in accordance to the measure-for-measure (*talion*) punishment (see Table 6.), called “*the judgment in the grave*” (Din Hibbut Ha-Kever, 6)⁴⁰⁹.

Table 6. Hanging punishments as a principle according to *Masekhet Hibbut Ha-Kever*

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Limb</i>	<i>Sin</i>
4	eyes	“ <i>looked with them upon transgression</i> ”
4	hands	“ <i>committed violence and robbery with them</i> ”
4	Legs (feet)	“ <i>hastened with them to transgression</i> ”, “ <i>gone to a married woman</i> ”
4	ears	“ <i>heard sinful utterances with them</i> ”
4	Lips (mouth)	“ <i>uttered with them words of foolishness</i> ”
4	tongue	“ <i>testified falsely with it</i> ”, “ <i>slanders his neighbor</i> ”

“*Rabbi Meir, in the name of Rabbi Joshua, says, “The judgment in the grave is more severe than that in Gehinnom*” (Din Hibbut Ha-Kever, 5)⁴¹⁰.

Masekhet Gehinnom reveals a group of hanging punishments for various sins (mostly committed by men) in one single verse (2:1, see Table 7).

⁴⁰⁹ Simcha Paul Raphael, op.cit., 172.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 171.

Table 7. Hanging punishments according to Masekhet Gehinnom I

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Limb</i>	<i>Sin</i>
2:1	hair (men)	<i>“let their hair grow to adorn themselves for sin” (?)</i>
2:1	eyes (possibly men)	<i>“followed their eyes to sin, and did not set the Holy Blessed One before them”</i>
2:1	noses (possibly men)	<i>“perfumed themselves to sin”</i>
2:1	tongues (possibly men)	<i>“they that had slandered”</i>
2:1	hands (possibly men)	<i>“they that had stolen and robbed”</i>
2:1	hanging ignominiously (i.e., genitals)	<i>“they that had committed adultery”</i>
2:1	feet (possibly men)	<i>“they that had run to sin”</i>
2:1	breasts (women)	<i>“they that uncovered their breasts before men, to make them sin”</i>

Table 8. Hanging punishments according to Masekhet Gehinnom II, 2nd-4th compartment of Gehinnom

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Limb</i>	<i>Sin</i>
4:2	tongues (men)	<i>“These are the men who slandered”</i> (second compartment of Gehinnom)
4:3	genitals (men)	<i>“These are the men who neglected their own wives, and committed adultery with the daughters of Israel”</i>
4:4	breasts (women)	<i>“the women who uncovered their hair and rent their veil, and stay in the open marketplace to suckle their children, in order to attract the gaze of men and to make them sin”</i>

In Judeo-Persian Ascension of Moses, Nagarsiel leads Moses to 7 sections of hell. In the first section, they observe people hung up on fiery chains and hooks. The references to hanging punishments are found in the description of first and partially second sections only. (see Table 9.). Description of the the remaining 6 sections includes various torments of

sinners, i.e. black scorpions attached to eyes, sinners in mud and sime from navel to their feet, burning in fire and half frozen, some of them being boiled in a pot filled with their own semen⁴¹¹ and filth, some fed by boiling filth and burning coals. There are punishments assigned even to the uncommon (Jewish?) sins of eating insects and reptiles. The angels of destruction are presented as tormentors in these scenes.

Judeo-Persian Ascension of Moses refers to the following titles of hell sections: 1) First section (no title specified); 2) Second section (*Aluqah*, “leech”), 3) Third section (*Dumah*); 4) Fourth section (*Sheol*); 5) Fifth section (*Abadon*) 6) Sixth section (no title specified); 7) Seventh section (no title specified).

Table 9. Hanging punishments according to Judeo-Persian Ascension of Moses

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Limb</i>	<i>Sin</i>
First section	Eyes (men)	looking at married women; seeing lerned men but no standing up before them; seeing poor men, but ignoring them
First section	ears	inclination to slander and talk idly in the synagogue; no attention to the cantors and to the words of the Torah; no heed of the lamentations of orphans and widows
First section	tongues	slandering others and eating carrion and nonkosher food; eating the food of gentiles; cursing the man’s bread and salt, in other words, breaking the law of hospitality
First section	hands	robbery, theft, bloodshed
First section	feet	trodding the path of sin; no synagogue attendance; no proper times for prayer
First section	breasts (women)	exposing breasts to men when suckling children and thus seducing men to sin; cursing husbands
First section	hair	Not explained
Second section (<i>Aluqah</i> , leech)	upside down covered with black worms	false swearing; profanation of Shabbat and the festivals; despise of the lerned; offense of orphans and widows; false testimony and belittlement of Torah

⁴¹¹ Splitting semen in vain (a biblical prohibition), according to this text, causes sperm to turn into the angels of destruction. See Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther’s Garden*, 193.

Table 10. Hanging punishments according to *Gan Eden we Gehinnom*

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Limb</i>	<i>Sin</i>
Second court	tongues (two men)	Men who slandered
Third court	genitals (men)	Left their wives and fornicated with daughters of Israel
Fourth court	breasts (women)	Women who uncovered their breasts and opened up their garments and suckled their child in the marketplace, seducing men to sin
Fifth court	-	

Himmelfarb has summarised hanging and measure-for-measure hanging punishments earlier in Pseudepigrapha (see Table 11 and 12), including *Gedulat Moshe* (Recension A).

Table 11. MEASURE-FOR-MEASURE HANGING PUNISHMENTS according to Himmelfarb

<i>Text</i>	<i>Limb</i>	<i>Sin</i>
Apoc. Pet.	tongue hair (women)	blasphemy Eth.: fornication
	Eth.: thighs (men) Gk.: feet (men)	Gk. : adultery Eth.: fornication Gk.: adultery
Acts Th.	tongue hair (women) hands feet	slander, lying immodesty stealing running to do evil
Apoc. Paul	eyebrows (men) hair (women)	adultery adultery
Apoc. Ezra	eyelids (men)	incest
Gk. Apoc. Mary	ear tongue	eavesdropping, gossip slander, false witness
Bar. Tesh.	genitals (men) breasts (women)	fornication immodesty
Isa. frag.	tongue genitals (men) breasts (women)	slander fornication with gentile women leading men astray
Josh. frag.	hands tongue eyes ears nose feet breasts	
Ged. Mosh.	eyes ears tongue feet hands breasts (women) hair (women) feet (women)	looking at married women, neighbor's money listening to vain words, not words of Torah gossip, idle chatter walking in slander, not to good deeds stealing, murder leading men to unchaste thoughts

Table 12. HANGING PUNISHMENTS FOR VERBAL AND SEXUAL SINS according to Himmelfarb

<i>Text</i>	<i>Sins of</i>	<i>Sexual</i>	<i>Sexual Sins: Men</i>
	<i>Speech</i>	<i>Sins:</i> <i>Women</i>	
Apoc. Pet.	tongue	hair	Eth.: thighs Gk.: feet
Acts Th.	tongue	hair	—
Apoc. Paul	—	hair	eyebrows
Apoc. Ezra	—	—	eyelids
Gk. Apoc. Mary	tongue	—	—
Dar. Tesh.	—	breasts	genitals
Isa. frag.	tongue	breasts	genitals
Josh. frag.	tongue	breasts	hands, feet, eyes
Ged. Mosh.	tongue	breasts	eyes
Elij. frag.	tongue	breasts	genitals, hands, eyes

2.4.2. Torturing creatures (angels).

Enochic „angels of destruction” (40:7; 53:3; 56:1; 62:11; 63:1; cf. 2 Enoch 10:3; 5) appointed to inflict sinners’ divine punishment in the flames of *Gehinnom* is not unusual to Jewish visionary texts. Most of the texts refer to torturing angels.

The explanation of the need for torturing angels according to *Masekhet Gehinnom*: “*Rabbi Yohanan said, “For every sin there is an angel appointed to obtain the expiation thereof; one comes first and obtains his expiation, then follows another and so on until all the sins are expiated. As with a debtor who has many creditors, and who come before the king to claim their debts, and the king delivers him to them, and says, Take him and divide him between yourselves,’ so also is the soul delivered in Gehinnom to cruel angels, and they divide it among themselves”* (2:5)⁴¹². There is a dispute of the severest sin to be punished in hell: “*Three descend to Gehinnom forever, and do not ascend anymore—the man who commits adultery, who blames his neighbor in public, and who is guilty of perjury. Others say those who seek honor for themselves by slandering their neighbors, and those who make*

⁴¹² Simcha Paul Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 178.

intrigues between man and wife in order to create strife among them” (3:6)⁴¹³. Thus, adultery, witness, and intrigue belong to the severest Jewish sins, since they all trespass basic commandments. Other punishments are assigned to apostates, those who deny the resurrection of the dead, to the renegades, slanderers and traitors (Masekhet Gehinnom 4:8)⁴¹⁴.

In *Seder Mahanot* (BHM), two angels of destruction are mentioned: Zaafeel (“My wrath is God”) and Samkhiel (“My support is God”) who take the wicked down to *Sheol*⁴¹⁵. *Otzar Midrashim* (“Treasury of Midrashim”) indeed refers to angels of destruction who seize the soul when it leaves sinner’s body and hurl it to the angels of wrath, and the angels of wrath hurl the soul into *Gehenna* where they torture her⁴¹⁶. According to *Gan Eden ve Gehinnom* (“Garden of Eden and Hell”), those who died without repentance are taken to Gehenna (BHM 5:50)⁴¹⁷.

Masekhet Gehinnom states the concept of seven hells with 40,000 angels of destruction (v.3)⁴¹⁸. Jewish midrash *Gedulat Moshe* refers to angels of destruction and 2000 swarming scorpions with deadly poison (42, 44)⁴¹⁹.

2.4.3. North and cold revisited?

Konen (BHM) refers to *Gehenna* situated in “*the North of the world*” with storehouses of the fire and storehouses of snow and hailstones, steam and frost, darkness and storm wind⁴²⁰. There are the dwellings of the demons and the parts of the northern wind. There are three princes appointed over three gates of *Gehinnom*: 1) *Negadsagiel* (gate in the desert), 2) *Kipod* (gate in the Sea of Tarshish), 3) *Samael* (gate in the Valley of Ben Hinnom opposite Zion and Jerusalem)⁴²¹. As we know, all of these infernal locations have biblical connotations. *Otzar Midrashim* (“Treasury of Midrashim”) locates the deepest part of

⁴¹³ Simcha Paul Raphael, op.cit., 178.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 180.

⁴¹⁵ Raphael Patai, *Book of Jewish Legends*, 280.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 281.

⁴¹⁷ Raphael Patai, op.cit., 281.

⁴¹⁸ Moses Gaster, *Studies and texts in Folk-lore*, 161.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 135-136.

⁴²⁰ Raphael Patai *Book of Jewish Legends*, 277.

⁴²¹ Raphael Patai, op.cit., 277.

Gehenna to be in “*the northern quarter*”⁴²². *Masekhet Gehinnom* says there are seven hells of seven compartments each, and there are seven rivers of fire and seven of hail (ice) in each of seven compartments (v.3)⁴²³.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 280.

⁴²³ Moses Gaster, *Studies and texts in Folk-lore*, 161.

Part V. Questions of „remote origin”. How to trace Zoroastrian origin to a non-Zoroastrian (Jewish, Christian, Muslim) source?

We come now to the analytical part of our study. For some clarification, let me remind the argumentation first. This concerns both historicity and concepts within texts exposed earlier. I'd suggest to begin with the historically oriented and then continue with text centered approach on this subject.

1. Approaching the subject of influence.

There are several shortages to be mentioned prior to the research related to chosen topic: 1) generalisations on the topic (lack of more detailed approach), and the next closely related to the previous 2) lack of specific exploration into separate texts (as demonstration) and finally 3) individual eschatology not particularly distinguished from universal eschatology, thus both phenomenons studied together. In this context my thesis tries to “fill-in the gap” of the above statements. Perhaps, this gap is not yet filled due to only few experts working in the field and thus remaining exclusive. However, one should remain convinced that Irano-Judaica will become available, explored and explained as more research follows.

We can summarize our earlier discussion upon brief conclusions:

1. Visionary literature as a literary genre has its origins in ancient Mesopotamia (Gilgamesh), particularly due to a widespread mantic or oracular wisdom represented by elitist class of wise and learned men (later known as Zoroastrian *magi*); Roots of Jewish apocalyptic genre popular in Graeco-Roman times (Jewish Pseudepigrapha) lead back to professional „wise men” of Babylon who specialised in cosmological (astronomy, meteorology, geography) and mantic wisdom and the art of interpreting dreams; thus a succeeding Jewish genre was established in the Babylonian diaspora, being drawn on rich local traditions;

2. Jewish apocalyptic in general is a phenomenon that emerged from a combination of both prophecy („prophetic oracles”) and the Wisdom traditions in the post-exilic times (during the intertestamental period);
3. Jewish apocalyptic material (contents of visions), possibly derived from Greek, Hellenistic and various Eastern sources of prophecy and apocalyptic literature (produced by various eschatological groups like Qumran sect, etc.) was particularly exposed to Iranian influence that lasted during the Persian period (proposals by Christopher Rowland and Mary Boyce);
4. Jewish apocalyptic literature as a post-prophetic movement has many references to extended reflection over destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile in Babylon where it emerged under tough circumstances; it continued to play a very vital part especially centuries after the Exile: the fact favouring this is that there is no evidence about the eschatological beliefs and apocalyptic literary activity (the biblical apocalypses) in the centuries preceding the destruction of the Temple;
5. The earliest example of visionary literature is found in the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch, 3rd Cent B.C.E.); most of elements of it pointing to ancient Mesopotamia;
6. Jewish Pseudepigrapha and particularly 2 Enoch was influenced by the circulating oral Zoroastrian *Ardā Wirāz Nāmāg* („The Book of the Righteous Wirāz” (Mary Boyce);
7. Jewish Pseudepigraphal and Apocryphal traditions (Second Temple apocalyptic literature, Judeo-Christian literature) were greatly influenced by Zoroastrian eschatological notions (Shaul Shaked);
8. Medieval Jewish visionary midrash, popular amongst masses, can be considered a descendant of earlier Jewish Pseudepigraphal and Apocryphal traditions (not rabbinically supported);
9. Medieval Jewish visionary midrash reached an elaborated form through **the 9th – 14th centuries**. This period chronologically corresponds to fixing of *Arda Wirāz* in written tradition and most of Zoroastrian centuries old oral traditions (and eschatological system in general) being written down during **the 9th and 10th centuries** (esp. the 9th Cent.);
10. Biblical tradition has no developed afterlife concept (no hell, no eschatology), therefore the idea should have come not from within but from outside as an external influence;

11. Zoroastrianism remained an official state religion of Iran throughout the Achaemenian, the Parthian (238 B.C. - 224 C.E.) and Sassanian rule (224 - 651 C.E.), Jews were the minority in Iran then;
12. Judaism and Zoroastrianism were in close interrelation since the destruction of the First Temple (early in the 6th cent. B.C.E.): Jews lived under Iranian empires of the Achaemenian, the Parthian and the Sasanian dynasties (224 - 651 C.E.) and should have been profoundly influenced by the appropriate culture and religion (see previous **point 8.**);
13. Jews thus remained under foreign dominance during **the first eight centuries** of the Common Era, most of them being the cultures even of a different background: Greece, Rome, Persia, and emerging Islamic culture;
14. Importance of rigidity and esotericism of Zoroastrian tradition (as closed-up system towards other surrounding religious traditions);
15. Zoroastrian tradition was strong in condemning heretics (Jews, Christians, gnostics, zurvanites, Mandaeans and others) in Sasanian times; heresy was defined as unacceptable interpretations (*zands*) of the holy text (*zandīg*), rendered by orthodoxy a product of „mixed doctrine” opposite to established doctrines of the „good religion”;
16. Zoroastrian literature presents a uniformly hostile view of Judaism (=Zoroastrianism could not be influenced by Judaic concepts).

As a basic principle, we need to look for common elements in both Zoroastrian and Jewish traditions. In the Sassanid period, it is impossible to consider Zoroastrian development apart of Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities and their respectfull developments. The Sassanid period is especially significant for the study of both Zoroastrianism and Islam⁴²⁴.

George William Carter⁴²⁵ summarises common features that unify Zoroastrianism and Judaism:

1. Each was proclaimed by prophet (Zaratushtra/Moses);
2. Each worshipped one God (exclusive strict monotheism);

⁴²⁴ M. Inostranzev, *Iranian Influence*, Part I. E-book.

⁴²⁵ George William Carter, *Zoroastrianism and Judaism*, 33.

3. Each believed in an evil power;
4. Each forbade images;
5. Each put an emphasis on a moral act;
6. Each was intolerant toward other systems;
7. Each developed priestly cults, and emphasized ceremonial cleanness;
8. Each represented a belief in angels and demons and in the future life.

1.1. Arguments in favour of Zoroastrian origins in non-Zoroastrian sources.

The suggestion of Zoroastrian influence upon Jewish texts demands careful examination of available sources of both concepts. The arguments in this respect should be convincing to leave finally the sphere of arbitrary assertions as it has been presented so far in scholarly literature. To be precise, Himmelfarb in her fundamental work „Tours of Hell” (not reprinted since 1985!) so far has done the most extended study on development of tours of hell elements within Jewish Pseudepigraphic tradition, drawing mostly upon Jewish and Greek sources. Yet, there are just a few references to the potential tracing back to Zoroastrian sources; no specific details described, either. It brings forward an exclusive methodology and literary form analysis on particular texts.

So far just few scholars have attempted to clarify the possible traces of influence or mutuality between Zoroastrian and Jewish texts. By now, there was no extended approach made to demonstrate a comparative case study of concepts in regard to afterlife based on particular religious texts within both traditions. Jacob Neusner has dealt with concepts of Jewish and Zoroastrian religious legislation in general, including a discussion by rabbis and zoroastrian priests of how two traditions deal with one and the same issues (i.e., rituals) and if the same conclusions were reached (paralellomania?).

The main thesis of my doctoral research attempts to search for Jewish Medieval *tours of hell* as written according to AWN matrix, or at least for Jewish sources that used a Zoroastrian legend, and transformed it accordingly into Jewish modes of apocalyptic visionary thinking yet preserving the several particular elements. I propose that some of hell descriptions were re-written according to Zoroastrian models and included borrowed or

imitated forms of Zoroastrian elements of imagery available from oral or written AWP tradition.

This task envisages for a revision of earlier concepts available in texts in terms of similarities in the language and of the imagery in the texts. This means accordingly that commonalities and features of the texts need to be stated. Two statements summarize the above.

Arguments in favour of Zoroastrian influence upon Jewish sources (incl. respectful Muslim and Christian texts):

A. General statements:

1. rigidity and esotericism of Zoroastrian tradition as the closed-up system: Zoroastrianism in relation (or more precisely, in *confrontation*) to other religions (=argument against Jewish⁴²⁶ influence on Zoroastrianism!) is closed up. This leads to an assertion that Jews are more adaptive than Zoroastrians; in case of rigidity, the possibility of interdependence is excluded;
2. biblical tradition has no developed afterlife concept (hell and demonology), therefore the idea should have come not from within but from outside as an external influence. (The sources of influence may be a subject of consideration, but transformations before entering Judaic texts of these direct or indirect influences should be taken into account).

B. Specific statements:

1. Zoroastrian texts are well structured in relation to hell descriptions which points that these texts are original;
2. Zoroastrian descriptions of hell tours⁴²⁷ (incl. separate elements noted further) are exclusively vivid in detail when compared to identical Jewish hell tours that comprise the same or slightly transformed elements; thus it is possible to consider the omitting of some

⁴²⁶ Zoroastrian literature presents a uniformly hostile view of Judaism - J.R. Russell, „The Sage in Ancient Iranian Literature,” in *AIS*. Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 399.

⁴²⁷ I am deliberately omitting the *ascent* type literature (being part of visionary journeys) because then this dissertation would have no direction towards proving its argument and thesis demonstration would grow into much larger study.

Zoroastrian elements and further invention of Jewish ones⁴²⁸ (=need to detect the previous developments within and outside tradition to find common or missing elements);

3. “demonstrative explanations” in visionary literature – “*Who are these..?*” – “*These are they who...*”;

4. Specifics of hell punishment (hanging punishments);

5. Demonology (angels of punishment and noxious creatures).

The above statements need some explanations. One of my specific arguments is that AWN descriptions on hell punishments are *extremely vivid* as a part of uniform system, while those encountered in Jewish and Judeo-Persian parallel sources (incl. Christian and Muslim ones) are not characteristic of the system. Thus, this points to a certain process of revision, edition and adaptation to own needs and interests. George William Carter puts as follows: „*For detail and vividness of portrayal, and for loftiness of conception, the Zoroastrian ideas of the future condition of the individual, of a judgment, of future rewards and punishments, and of a resurrection, are far in advance of anything to be found in Judaism*”⁴²⁹.

There is a general tendency in Zoroastrian texts on afterlife: the fourth metaphysical philosophical dimension is added⁴³⁰ to the visual descriptions. It corresponds to four (five) senses – sight, hearing (namely, sounds heard by the visionary), taste, smell, touch. This concept is expanded in concentrated descriptions of these texts. There are no examples found in Jewish tours of hell that air can be smelled and touched by hand, like in AWN. As to my mind, this is a very good argument of comparative study between descriptions inherent in texts of the same genre as it demonstrates that Zoroastrian sources bear the most descriptive content concentrating on every smallest detail. This particular content may be considered as a very certain source material for Jewish, Christian and Muslim further expansions of the afterlife journeys (“tours of hell”). Interestingly, Judeo-Persian Midrash on the Ascension of Moses refers to punishment more strict than usually for Jewish concepts in terms of hell penalties for sinners who trespassed Jewish law (see Table 9.). In regard to primary source on

⁴²⁸ This process is typical of Pseudepigraphy in general as, for example, a Jewish text (Ged. Mosh.) or Christian text (Apoc. of Paul) may bear distinctive interpolations from common Zoroastrian lore

⁴²⁹ George William Carter, *Zoroastrianism and Judaism*, 101.

⁴³⁰ Not a fourth *physical* dimension in modern physics, but a category similar to the one in experimental cinematography is implied.

afterlife, the evidence points to more detailed accounts in Zoroastrian texts which are dated earlier. The issue of dating of available texts will be elaborated in a while.

1.2. Concepts in favour of Zoroastrian origins

Michael Stone is convinced, that medieval Jewish tradition should be examined in more detail to distinguish specific contributions within the material⁴³¹. Suggestions of Reeves, Himmelfarb and Shaked also point in this direction of the study! Martha Himmelfarb suggests Enoch's tour to be based upon or influenced by Greek *nekylia* of the Odyssey or more probably upon earlier Ezekiel's tour⁴³². This shouldn't however be an ultimate assumption of the primary source since the Book of Enoch (middle of the 2nd cent. BCE.) comprises many Iranian elements when introducing evil powers coming into the world. Still, the Book of Ezekiel was composed under the spirit of Babylonian exile⁴³³. According to several scholars, the earliest pieces of Enoch's vision tour are of Mesopotamian origins, and were composed out of tradition closely associated with a local Jewish diaspora community, more precisely, the Mesopotamian Jewish tradition⁴³⁴.

⁴³¹ Michael Stone, *Scriptures, Sects and Visions*, 110-111.

⁴³² Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 73.

⁴³³ See extended article on this: J.R. Russell, „*Ezekiel and Iran*,” in *AIS*, 899-907.

⁴³⁴ I. Fröhlich, „Time and Times and Half a Time”, 52.

1.3. Arda Wirāz Nāmag and Medieval visionary midrashim on hell punishments.

1.3.1. In regard to general hell imagery

It seems that AWN develops or is based upon the earlier Babylonian tradition on afterlife, extended into a complex system of hell punishments (Inanna is hung on a stake in Underworld; sinners are executed to digest filth and menstrual blood). Descriptions of punishments endured in Babylonian underworld are vague, yet demonstrate certain features. The Epic of Gilgamesh is the oldest Near Eastern written source on afterlife dated around 3000 B.C.E. Enkidu has a vision of him gone into the underworld, the “House of Dust” (“the House of Darkness”, 5-11):

*“Seizing me, he led me down to the House of Darkness,
the dwelling of Irkalla,
to the house where those who enter do not come out,
along the road of no return,
to the house where those who dwell, do without light,
where dirt is their drink, their food is of clay,
where, like a bird, they wear garments of feathers,
and light cannot be seen, they dwell in the dark,
and upon the door and bolt, there lies dust.”*

Underworld is imaged as the land or prison of the dead and as a country of clay and dust. However, this concept of Babylonian underworld lacks references to moral qualities of the dead⁴³⁵ similar to the ones presented at the biblical concept of *Sheol*. These are earlier parallels for AWN.

Jeffrey Burton Russel, who had researched the perceptions of evil from antiquity till emergence of Christianity, states, that Zoroastrianism influenced Greek (most probably hellenism as a relatively late development!) and Christian thinking about evil. Russel points out the ambiguity in regards to the question of extent of this impact as the Sasanid period is

⁴³⁵ Alan Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 8.

to be the most effective in relation to these developments that took place two centuries following the rise of Christianity⁴³⁶.

1.3.2. In regard to distinctive elements in hell imagery.

There are several unique elements in Zoroastrianism, not met in other traditions. Hell appears to be three-fold with three kinds of involved sinful spheres: evil thoughts (Pahlavi *dušmat*), evil words (Pahlavi *dušuxt*), and evil deeds (Pahlavi *dušvaršt*). Accordingly, there are places called: *Duš-humat*, a place of evil thoughts; *Duš-huht*, a place of evil words; *Duš-huvaršt*, a place of evil deeds. Besides, the fall (totter - *kapinedo*) of a sinner below into Hell off the *Chinvat bridge* is headdown. “*He who is of the wicked, as he places a footstep on to the bridge, on account of affliction (siparih) and its sharpness, falls from the middle of the bridge, and rolls over head-foremost. And the unpleasantness of his path to hell is in similitude such as the worldly one in the midst of that stinking and dying existence (hastan), there where numbers of the sharp-pointed darts (tezo muk dujo) are planted out inverted and point upwards, and they come unwillingly running; they shall not allow them to stay behind, or to make delay*” (Dādestān i Dēnīg, 21:7-8). This is an interesting detail, an element peculiar to Zoroastrian tradition. In an earlier myth, the disobedient Satan is reported to be fallen (refer to the fall of Satan motif) down from heaven in the same position. Since then he appears to be trapped in the lowest of hells.

Accordingly, the innovative thinking presented also in AWN source includes: a three-fold division of evil deeds judged accordingly; fall into hell position headdown and torture of cold.

Jewish Medieval visionary Midrashim presents rotation of sinners between upper and lower hells staying in each for twelve months as a hell principle. This seems to be a position of reconcilatory nature with elements of justice not specifically available in Zoroastrian (and Islamic) texts on afterlife. In addition, snow serves as an instrument to repose of the punishment, not as a method of more severe punishment. Interestingly, this repose takes place on Shabbat while according to Apoc. of Paul, periodical respite from pain in hell is

⁴³⁶ Д.Б.Рассел, *Дьявол*, 141.

accomplished on Sunday⁴³⁷. Silverstein points out that this incident is related to and probably based upon the rabbinical tradition of Shabbat-day rest in hell that appears to be applied by the 3rd cent. C.E.⁴³⁸.

1.3.3. In regard to the nature of hell punishments.

Fire is present in Zoroastrian (AWN) hell punishments; however, due to the special ritual value of fire among Zoroastrians, it is not put forward as an instrument of punishment. Instead, fire is substituted by various heat forms, including hot molten metal, cauldrons, ovens, and frying pans⁴³⁹. Hanging as a punishment was never used neither in Palestine, nor practised by Judaism or Christianity. Per contra, it was widely practiced in Babylon and Persian-Assyrian Empire. Consequently, the origin and source of hanging punishment in hell comes from outside of Palestine.

1.3.4. In regard to executors of hell punishments.

A soul being attacked by *Ahriman* and the demons as a path to hereafter in Zoroastrian texts is likened to a wolf harassing sheep or compared to a traveller who has lost his way⁴⁴⁰. This period is described as a struggle in favour of the the soul⁴⁴¹. During the three day period while soul remains on earth, it undergoes greater suffering and tribulation than is experienced by the wicked in hell for a period of nine thousand years⁴⁴². Paradise and heavenly ascents⁴⁴³ have been less prominent in descriptions; as for AWN, it contains approximately 60 % (83 of the total 101) chapters that describe hell punishment. Indeed it is interesting to see, for example, how hell tortures are arranged in terms of revealing

⁴³⁷ Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, 79.

⁴³⁸ Theodore Silverstein, op.cit., 79. Also the succeeding Muslim lore is influenced.

⁴³⁹ Eleen Gardiner, <http://www.hell-on-line.org/AboutZOR.html>

⁴⁴⁰ Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 19.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 19.

⁴⁴³ Meanwhile heavenly ascents (within texts of so-called ascent apocalypses) were researched more in detail in various historical contexts. Especially productive research was done by Israeli scholar Moshe Idel in his work *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* and M.Himmelfarb's preceding extensive study *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*.

Zoroastrian social structure and daily religious orders that governed it. According to Zoroastrianism, the sin of lies is one of the most severely punished crimes; the concept is representing the party of *Ahriman*⁴⁴⁴.

Among other visionary literature considered, Vera Moreen suggests possible relation of Judeo-Persian *Midrash on the Ascension of Moses* to earlier Zoroastrian sources, most probably AWN (9th-10th cent.)⁴⁴⁵. The following Bauckham's conclusion speaks in favour of primary Zoroastrian Persian source: a list of punishments for sins of speaking (slandering) and eating (form of punishment supposedly old) in Hebrew versions of *Gedulat Moshe* are of remarkably late date, thus these may be a later modification of the tradition of punishments in hell⁴⁴⁶.

In all the 7 sections of hell described at Judeo-Persian *Midrash on the Ascension of Moses*, the hero is shown great tortures of sinners carried out by the so-called *angels of destruction*⁴⁴⁷. The description, similar to AWN text, includes many Zoroastrian elements. Angel Nasargiel (also Nesargiel), the guardian of *Gehinnom* (hell as burning fire), shows Moses angels of destruction that torture and beat sinners by chains of fire and inflict hanging punishments. It should be noted that the fire is present in both heaven and hell in this concept. This is an exception in terms of Zoroastrianism where there is fire in the heavenly realm only. In Judaism, Torah as an element of visionary midrash is the center in heaven while in Zoroastrianism sacred fire is only present in heaven.

In Jewish midrash *Otzar Midrashim* („Treasury of Midrashim”), the angels of wrath and the angels of destruction are present as torturers⁴⁴⁸.

The *angels of destruction* resemble the tradition more characteristic of Zoroastrian afterlife texts where they were assigned their special functions. Demons (*Daēvas*) are also often mentioned in respect to Zoroastrian burial customs, therefore special purification ritual is held prior to burial.

⁴⁴⁴ Д.Б.Рассел, *Дьявол*, 324.

⁴⁴⁵ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 190.

⁴⁴⁶ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 126-127.

⁴⁴⁷ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 192-193.

⁴⁴⁸ Raphael Patai, *Book of Jewish Legends*, 281.

1.4. Dating of textual sources. Zoroastrian and Medieval Jewish visionary texts.

Interesting enough for modern scholars is the history of writing down of famous collection of Oriental stories „One Thousand and One Nights” (originally, under Persian title *Hezar efsane*, „Thousand Stories” in the 10th Century C.E.). This is a collection of various folktales that joined together motifs from Persian, Indian, Egyptian, Arabic, Jewish, Syrian legends and common lore; it is considered to be an important monument of centuries long Oriental storytelling tradition. As it appears from scholarly work, not Persians themselves but Christians were the most active in Persian science texts transmission to the West. Christian Syrians served as intermediary transmitters. Persian imaginative literature (stories) was greatly respected as well; and the *Thousand and One Nights (Hazar Afsan)* is a core source for migratory motives into the West from tales of Sasanian literary origin (e.g., Pahlavi literature). Foltz makes it clear that the *Tales of A Thousand and One Nights* is „the Sasanian literary tradition assimilated into the Islamic world”⁴⁴⁹.

The above serves a good example of a modification of the same motifs within one piece of literature. Thus we can refer to an observation that parallel motifs are found in the Bible, Talmud and Jewish midrashic sources as well.

1.4.1. Oral and written traditions.

It is obvious, that Jews lived under foreign dominance during the first eight centuries of the C.E.. Most of the surrounding cultures were even of different background, i.e. Greece, Rome, Persia, emerging Islamic culture.

Lately Prof. Galit Hasan-Rokem (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) had made an attempt to analyse and interpret rabbinic midrashic literature of late antiquity within a context of broader intercultural folk narratives. She gives a striking example of common folk narrative existing in both midrashic text *Lamentations Rabbah* (as well as the Babylonian Talmud) and many Arab traditions over a long period of time being a part of the communication of two cultures⁴⁵⁰. She suggests that the stories may have moved back and

⁴⁴⁹ Richard Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble*, 126.

⁴⁵⁰ Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life. Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 77.

forward many times. Prof. Hasan-Rokem states that her scholarly interest is not related to the particular research whether the story has been transmitted from Arabs to Jews or vice versa⁴⁵¹. This rather points to a mutual cultural communication (discourse) between the two⁴⁵². Generally, it is hard to determine whether the geographical transmission between places and linguistic transfer between languages was oral or written⁴⁵³. However, it is important to conclude that folk narrative can be both written and oral, thus, studying texts we need to be certain about the versions preserved in written form and have to assume the existence of innumerable oral versions that have not reached us until this day⁴⁵⁴. That is, to say that scholars of folk literature always need to remain „*invariably aware that the unknown far exceeds the known*”, an incognito substance prevailing⁴⁵⁵.

We should also take into consideration that there folk archives may contain unread and untranslated manuscripts not yet revealed and new conclusions are to follow consequently. To be accounted, the existence of some common motifs in un-written oral tradition parallel to a written one doesn't necessarily mean one to be older than another. It is more than possible, that a written tradition can be changed and enriched diachronically in many ways upon the influence of surrounding preserved oral traditions, like in a case of „One Thousand and One Nights”. This is a „*mechanism of cultural adaptation*”⁴⁵⁶.

Similarly, we can note such textual phenomena as Judeo-Persian (with its origin in the former territory of Iran during the Middle Ages) and Judeo-Arabic literature.

⁴⁵¹ Galit Hasan-Rokem, op.cit., 77.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 79.

⁴⁵³ Galit Hasan-Rokem, op.cit., 79.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p.82.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 87.

⁴⁵⁶ Galit Hasan-Rokem, op.cit., 87.

1.4.2. Writing down of traditions. Dating of sources. Shift from oral to written tradition?

According to Reeves, in the Jewish apocalyptic mentality of late antiquity (beginning from the 7th century onwards), *written scripture* becomes the source of revelation⁴⁵⁷. This is a notable shift from orality to textuality is characteristic to the early centuries of the C.E. Some scholars of medieval literature have argued that *books* rather than oral traditions are the most important instrument for the transmission of folk literature⁴⁵⁸.

Zoroastrianism remained an official state religion of Iran throughout the Achaemenian, Parthian (238 B.C.E. - 224 C.E.) and Sassanian rule (224 - 651 C.E.)⁴⁵⁹. Altogether Sassanian rule lasted for four-hundred-year of reign. Zoroastrian written literature is based upon much older spoken sources. It flourished especially during the 9th and 10th centuries in a way of a defense strategy⁴⁶⁰.

The fact is, that almost all Zoroastrian Middle Persian (Pahlavi) centuries old oral traditions (*Bundahishn*, *Denkārd*, *Dadestan-I-Denig*, *Mainyo-I-Khard*, etc.) were written down during the 9th and 10th centuries⁴⁶¹. As to both Judaism and Zoroastrianism, writing down of these religious traditions was accomplished a century and a half just before and just after the rise of Islam and the Muslim conquest of the Near East, that is, the 7th through the 9th century C.E.⁴⁶².

1.4.3. Dating and setting of AWN and Medieval visionary midrashim.

AWN is a religious text, while Medieval visionary midrashim remain interpretative texts of post-rabbinics. Midrashim texts were mostly concerned with the apocalyptic and messianic speculations including popular legends that circulated mostly among common folk masses.

⁴⁵⁷ John Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 6.

⁴⁵⁸ Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life*, 69, 215-216.

⁴⁵⁹ Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, 4.

⁴⁶⁰ Richard Foltz, *Spirituality in the land of the noble*, 37.

⁴⁶¹ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Zoroastrianism at the Dusk of Late Antiquity*, Preface, IX.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 1, 5.

AWN has a clear religious setting (=to abstain from sin), while for Medieval visionary midrashim remains not clear. Earlier resemblances in accounts have been pointed out by A.Jellinek⁴⁶³, Tisdall⁴⁶⁴, Asin⁴⁶⁵, Gaster⁴⁶⁶, Himmelfarb⁴⁶⁷, Segal⁴⁶⁸, Moreen⁴⁶⁹, Rustomji⁴⁷⁰ and others, still these remarks are presented just in a form of reference, and are not extended in detail.

Although different suggestions are made in regard to the time of composing AWN, Zoroastrian text is traditionally dated as written down from oral tradition during the Sassanian period from the 3rd to the 7th century C.E. M. Boyce considers AWN (a popular legend among Zoroastrian circles) to be an orally preserved tradition which was written down during an early Islamic period. It has been suggested by prominent scholars in the field that the text bears older layers with ancient lore and thus has different solving of the same issues. Khanbaghi offers so far the latest dating of AWN as written down in the 13th century during the Mongol invasion by Persian Zoroastrian poet Zartusht Bahram (*Zartosht Bahram e Pazhdo*)⁴⁷¹.

Anthony Troyer suggests the 4th century. James Russell and Hultgard dates AWN to be set down in a written form in the 9th-10th century, and points out that the story is very ancient⁴⁷². Later and enlarged versions of the text are available from the 16th century. The text was translated into Sanscrit and then to several other Indian languages. Persian translation had appeared in the second half of 17th century (about 1645) while the first translation of text into English was made only in the second half of the 19th century (about 1843).

⁴⁶³ BHM, Vol. 5, 21.

⁴⁶⁴ C. Tisdall, *The Original Sources of the Quran. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (London - New York: 1905). On-line text is available at:
http://www.muhammadanism.org/Tisdall/sources_quran/default.htm

⁴⁶⁵ Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 75.

⁴⁶⁶ Moses Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folk-Lore*, 124.

⁴⁶⁷ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 47-48.

⁴⁶⁸ Alan Segal, *Life After Death*, 195-196.

⁴⁶⁹ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 190.

⁴⁷⁰ Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire*, 34.

⁴⁷¹ Aptin Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the Star and the Cross*, 80.

⁴⁷² J.B Russel, "The Platonic Myth of Er, Armenian Ara, and Iranian Ardāy Wīrāz," in *AIS. Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies*, 9 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 24.

Mitra Ara dates the composition of the book during the 5th or 6th century CE⁴⁷³. According to John Waterhouse, AWN more probably belongs to the 6th century⁴⁷⁴. John Joseph Collins defines AWN as a Persian analogue to Jewish apocalypses dated around the 9th century; yet he adds that the ascent of the soul is certainly an old topic in Persian tradition; however we may not be fully certain because of the issues of dating of this text⁴⁷⁵.

Term *ardā* is derived from *artāvan* which characterized those who went to paradise, the “blessed” dead; the term is preserved as *ardā* in some phrases as *ardā zardušt*, *ardā frawahr*⁴⁷⁶.

One of the facts to favor the above is that Wirāz is mentioned briefly in the *Avesta*, the earliest written Zoroastrian sacred document (second millennium B.C.E., written down approx. till the 5th cent. C.E.)⁴⁷⁷. At the same time, the earliest preserved text comprising *tour of hell* is found in the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch, the 3rd Cent B.C.E.)⁴⁷⁸.

There is a version that AWN was written for the sake of the soul of a king⁴⁷⁹. When dating AWN (by the way, as the apocalyptic text), Philip Huyse goes back to the older core, approaching closely the inscriptions of the early Sasanian high priest Kirder in the 3rd century C.E.⁴⁸⁰.

Scholar Richard Bauckham thinks that AWN definitely influenced Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition, including the Jewish pseudepigrapha and even more Zoroastrian apocalyptic tradition. He believes the vision of Arda Wirāz to be rather a legend (originally preserved in oral tradition) than a historical account indebted in its specific details (*hanging punishments*) and motifs to the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition, especially the concept of Greek *Hades*. In addition, he thinks that distinctive Zoroastrian features of otherworld

⁴⁷³ Mitra Ara, *Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Traditions*, 205.

⁴⁷⁴ J.W. Waterhouse, *Zoroastrianism*, 101, 56.

⁴⁷⁵ J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 33.

⁴⁷⁶ Gernot Windfuhr, ed. *The Iranian Languages*. Routledge Language Family Series. (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 264.

⁴⁷⁷ J.B. Russel, “The Sage in Ancient Iranian Literature,” 394.

⁴⁷⁸ Milik thinks that 1 Enoch bears archaic literary and scientific features (especially, the Astronomical Book) linking it with ancient Babylonian (Sumerian) literature and Enoch Chapter 77 certainly has its beginning in the Mesopotamian centres of scholarship. See Florentino García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 61.

⁴⁷⁹ J.B. Russel, “The Sage in Ancient Iranian Literature,” 394.

⁴⁸⁰ Philip Huyse, “Late Sasanian Society between Orality and Literacy,” 143.

were added to the text relatively later⁴⁸¹. However, in general this view does not correspond to those who support the exclusive rigidity of Zoroastrian tradition.

We can conclude that the Pahlavi text was written down relatively late (yet it was composed relatively early!). The time period which corresponds to late Medieval period in Europe. At the same time, Jewish Pseudepigrapha was traditionally composed much earlier (starting from Greek-Roman period in Palestine). It is in favour of possible influence of Zoroastrian AWN on Medieval legends of Jews and Muslims (Medieval midrashim and *hadiths*). AWN mentions such ancient elements of Zoroastrian religion as the *Chinvat bridge*, punishing angels and *daevas*, assistants of Evil Spirit *Ahriman*, etc.

When we consider Jewish medieval texts, the following can be noticed. Fears of Muslim dominance gave rise to Jewish messianism and apocalyptic literature (in the late 7th century)⁴⁸². Prof. John Reeves points out that these texts are written down under hostile world powers following the late antiquity through the first half of the 7th century⁴⁸³. According to Stern, by the 8th century the classical rabbinic texts were at the final stage of compilation and probably even in the final stages of compilation. The center of Jewish creativity then was shifted from Palestine to Babylonia. While from the 8th to 10th centuries (three hundred years), it was a turning point in Medieval Jewish literature⁴⁸⁴. Raphael notes that Medieval legendary midrashim were elaborated and written down from the 10th till 14th centuries⁴⁸⁵. Vision of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi is the product of the 3rd cent., written down between the 6th and 10th centuries⁴⁸⁶.

Shall we consider particular parallels between several texts within pseudepigraphic tradition, we will come along late Jewish midrash available in many variations: the Ascension of Moses (in Hebrew known as *Gedulat Moshe*). This midrash (preserved in two Hebrew and one Judeo-Persian versions) shows striking similarities to the Zoroastrian AWN both in its structure and specific details. Shaked and other scholars (Amnon Netzer, Vera

⁴⁸¹ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 18.

⁴⁸² Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, 56.

⁴⁸³ John C. Reeves, ed. *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 5

⁴⁸⁴ M. Mirsky, D. Stern, *Rabbinic Fantasies*, 15.

⁴⁸⁵ Simcha Paul Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 163.

⁴⁸⁶ Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, 120.

Moreen) pointed this direction as well⁴⁸⁷. There are several suggestions for dating this text: Abraham Wertheimer (transl. in German) dates it from the 15th or 16th century which nowadays would be considered as too late date. Vera Moreen assumes that a clear date cannot be stated for neither the Hebrew manuscripts, nor its succeeding transmission into Judeo-Persian version; although the earliest possible date for the reduction of the Judeo-Persian version is the first half of the 13th century⁴⁸⁸. In general, there is a strong conviction that the Hebrew text *Gedulat Moshe* bears much older traditions on afterlife⁴⁸⁹ and these have come into Judeo-Persian version more probably rather from oral than written sources⁴⁹⁰. Earlier Martha Himmelfarb has pointed out that this text refers to hanging punishments (her own *terminus technicus*); she had observed some differences among similar texts of this type: *Gedulat Moshe* punishes for verbal and sexual sins such limbs as tongue, breasts and eyes where the hanging by breasts is a “*perfect application of measure-for-measure / lex talionis principle of justice or retribution for bodily injury by matching injury is implied, which is further attributed to retribution in afterlife / not frequent in biblical and rabbinic texts, but evolving in post-biblical tradition*” punishment⁴⁹¹. Interestingly, AWN encounters hanging punishments for Zoroastrian sins, while Judeo-Persian *Gedulat Moshe* considers the version of punishments for Jewish sins (cf. Tables 1 and 9).

The above chronological frames are exceptionally important for our thesis.

⁴⁸⁷ Shaul Shaked, *Eschatology in Zoroastrian Religion*. Article published on-line at http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/zoroastrian_eschatology.htm

⁴⁸⁸ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 190.

⁴⁸⁹ Simcha Paul Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 206.

⁴⁹⁰ Vera Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 190.

⁴⁹¹ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 88, see Table 11 and 12.

Part VI. Later Developments.

To review some later developments of the visionary genre discussed above, we should briefly consider Muslim *Miraj* and Dante's Divine Comedy.

1. Arda Wirāz Nāmag, Islamic Miraj and other parallels.

Arabic *mi'raj* („ascension”) would be a right choice in terms of the consideration of topic on afterlife. *Hadiths* (lit. „narratives”, legends,) in Islamic tradition had transmitted and preserved the extensive exegetical midrashic material related to the words and deeds of the prophet Muhammad (so-called *isnads*). There are several allusions to afterlife in Quranic text; these concepts were later extended in various versions of prophet's Muhammad's night journey described in the medieval Muslim folk legends and narratives. Since around the end of the 7th century (661–750) *Mi'raj* used to be traditionally considered to reflect a real journey from Mecca to Jerusalem as described in Quran: „*Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night [asra lailan] from the Sacred Mosque [al-masjid al-haram] to the farthest Mosque*” (17:1; transl. By Abdullah Yusuf Ali)⁴⁹². Earlier commentators identified „*the farthest Mosque*” (*al-masjid al-aqsa*) with the heavens and considered the journey as a dream vision seen by Muhammad while sleeping⁴⁹³. Some other commentators claimed it to be Muhammad's soul instead, that entered heaven on a journey. The *mi'raj* is compared to the manner of a dead person's (Muslims) soul to pass to the judgment at God's throne (the same issue is concerned in regards to the journey of Wirāz in AWN).

Muhammad visits seven heavens, paradise (*jannah*, equivalent for Hebrew *Gan Eden*) and hell (*jahannah*, equivalent for Hebrew *Gehinnom*). In his journey, he is accompanied by archangel *Jibril* (Heb. equivalent is Gabriel).

There are also 7 sections of hell in Muslim tradition; more modifications appear within hadiths (see Table 13 and 14.).

⁴⁹² И.М. Фильштинский, *Представление о «Потустороннем мире» в арабской мифологии и литературе*, Восток-запад (Москва: «Наука», 1989), 57.

⁴⁹³ И.М. Фильштинский, *op.cit.*, 57.

Table 13. Gates of hell according to Muslim 1.hadith tradition

Title of inferno gate	Literal meaning of the term	Corresponding category of sinners
<i>Jahannam</i>	Gehenna, „Fiery Hell”	Serious Muslim trespassers
<i>Laza</i>	„Glowing Fire”, „Flame”	Zoroastrians* and followers of Iblis
<i>Al-Hatma</i>	„Greedy Fire”, „Furnace”	Jews
<i>As-Sair</i>	„Flaming Fire”	Christians
<i>Saqar</i>	„Burning Fire”, „Blaze”	The Sabians
<i>Al--Jahim</i>	„Intense Fire”	Polytheists
<i>Al-Hawiya</i>	„Abyss”	Hypocrites and those who reject the truth

* Originally referred as Magians.

Table 14. Circles of hell according to Muslim 2.hadith tradition

Title of inferno circle	Literal meaning of the term	Corresponding realm of sinners
<i>Adim</i>	„Surface”	Habitation of mankind
<i>Basit</i>	„Plain”	Men that eat their flesh and blood
<i>Thaqil</i>	„Region of Distress”	Habitation of beastly men
<i>Batih</i>	„Place of Torrents”	Dwellers with wings and no eyes
<i>Hayn</i>	„Region of Adversity”	Infidels devoured by serpents
<i>Masika / Sijin</i>	„Store” / „Dungeon”	Sinners tormented by scorpions
<i>As-Saqar</i>	„Burning Fire”, „Blaze”	Place where men are burned
<i>Athara</i>	„Place of Damp and Great Cold”	Home of Iblis

In relation to the Night Journey of Muhammad, the *Buraq* myth appears in Muslim tradition since at least 14th century. It visualizes otherworldly journey on the basis of ancient depictions of griffins, sphinxes, and centaurs; this to become a favourite subject of Persian miniature painting, either.

The 15th century manuscript *Miraj Nameh* („The Book of Ascension”) is a good source where similar motifs are found. The available Latin or other languages’ translations

(French, for instance) of this text had probably left an impact on Dante's *Divine Comedy*⁴⁹⁴. Muhammad there rides to see heaven and hell on a *Buraq*, accompanied by angel Gabriel.

Figure 7. Muhammad riding on Buraq. *Miraj Nameh*. 15th century. Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.



Miraj Nameh (translation by poet Mir Haydar into eastern Turkish) enlists Muhammad to see women of easy virtue hung up by the hair since they were “*letting their hair be seen by strangers, encouraged by criminal relations*” (see Figure 8).

⁴⁹⁴ The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet: *Miraj Nameh*: Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris (Manuscript Supplement Turn 190). Introduction and commentaries by Marie-Rose Seguy (New York: George Braziller, 1977), 19.

Figure 8. Hanging women according to manuscript *Miraj Nameh*. 15th century. Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. Plate 50 (fragment).



1.1. Description of torments of sinners according to Miraj.

The *Book of the Ladder* (or the Book of Stairs) belong to the texts of the 8th century; it was quoted by Umberto Eco in his recently published history of ugliness⁴⁹⁵. The text contains demonstrative explanations and hanging punishments, as well as torturers (devils): Muhammad is lead by angel Gabriel who reveals him the otherworldly secrets that include what will happen on Judgment Day. According to *Muhammad's Ladder*, hell is divided in 7 regions (each with a special name) with 7 gates one being placed upon another; sinners are tormented by great fire (*halfalak*), the beasts (*tatas*), serpents, scorpions “*as big as mules, and their tails are as long or longer than a lance's shaft. In each tail there are 360 joints, and each joint has 360 points, and in each stinger [are] 360 pots quite full of venom* so very powerful that if one were to put a single one of these pots at the center of the world, the trees, bodies of water, animals, people, and all other things alive there would be destroyed through

⁴⁹⁵ Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness* (London: Harvill Secker, 2007).

the great stench issuing from it and the extreme horror that it causes.” (Chapter 55). These scorpions are present in hell as severe tormentors of sinners as their venom so strong that it separates flesh from bones (Chapter 55). Also a sterile wind, a sea of extremely bitter waters (*halmohale* or „horrible” in Arabic), „*so bitter that the largest stone in the world would melt in them*” is applied as the punishment (Chapt.59.). *Azirat bridge* [most probably, *al-Sirat*] that will stand over hell on Judgment Day is mentioned; its length equals the distance of a travel of 500 years (Chapt.69.), but its length is differentiated (cf. Chapt. 76 – 1,270, 000 years; and 78 – 25 000 years). Sinners will fall down from *Azirat bridge* directly into hell while ones worthy of salvation will endure a purgation by the flames of fire while on the bridge before entering heaven (Chapt.78.). This bridge is „*finer than a hair from the head and sharper than any sword blade*” (Chapt. 76). The tortures in hell are performed by angels „*so large and strong that each of them could swallow the whole world without ever noticing it*” (Chapter 73). The text quoted by Eco runs as follows:

“*And when Gabriel [Arab. Gibril] had finished his report I, Mohammed, prophet and messenger of God, saw sinners tormented in hell in many different ways, and so I felt such enormous compassion for them that I began to sweat all over; and I saw several among them whose lips were being cut off with fiery scissors. Then I asked Gabriel who they were. And he told me that they were those who sow words of discord among the people. And others, whose tongues were being cut off, were those who had borne false witness. I saw others hanging by their members on fiery hooks, and they were the men who had committed adultery on earth. And afterwards I saw a great crowd of women, an almost incredible number, and all were suspended by their privates⁴⁹⁶ from great fiery beams. And these hung from fiery chains, so extraordinary hot that no one could possibly express it. And I asked Gabriel who those women were. And he told me that they were the whores who had never abandoned fornication and lasciviousness. (...)*”⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁶ Women genitals are ment; Himmelfarb notes this text to be an exception as in Jewish tours of hell adulterous women are hung by their breasts and in Christian by their hair indeed, since breasts or hair are the seductive part of their body – Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 84.

⁴⁹⁷ Translation is taken from Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness* (London: Harvill Secker, 2007), 87. New translation of the text is available recently – Reginald Hyatte, *The Prophet of Islam in Old French: The Romance of Muhammad (1258) and the Book of Muhammad’s Ladder (1264): English Translations, with an Introduction* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997).

In Muhammad's *Miraj*, specific punishments are structured in random manner – it „notes significant sins, but does not create a hierarchy among them”⁴⁹⁸. According to Tisdall, in regard to *mi'raj* it is “easy to trace the origin of it's main features to earlier legends, and especially to Zoroastrian sources”⁴⁹⁹. The major source for Tisdall is Zoroastrian text AWN. This position is also supported by Muslim scholar Saifullah⁵⁰⁰.

1.2. Other parallels.

1.2.1. Medieval Old Slavonic apocryphon “Weeping of Our Lady”

We may find a very similar description of details of punishing the sinners in Medieval Old Slavonic apocryphon “Weeping of Our Lady” (*Хождение Богородицы по мукам*). It is structured in a way of dialogues between Our Lady and Archangel Michael who guides Her on the tour to four directions of the otherworld where She sees various scenes of torments of the sinners. Although the context is basically Christian, we may follow the same concept of retribution as given above. Here are some excerpts translated from Russian by myself.

⁴⁹⁸ Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire*, 34.

⁴⁹⁹ C. Tisdall, *The Original Sources of the Quran*, On-line text is available at: http://www.muhammadanism.org/Tisdall/sources_quran/default.htm

⁵⁰⁰ M.S.M. Saifullah, *Arda Wiraz Namag (Iranian “Divina Commedia”) and The Prophet's Night Journey*. See on-line: <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/Quran/Sources/ZRisra.html>

Table 15. Hanging punishments according to Miraj

Textual references	Limbs under-going punishment / (gender)	Sins committed	torturers
	hair suspended (women)	walking uncovered in front of strangers	
	tongues suspended on fiery hooks (women)	scornful attitude towards, false witness, evil speech, quarel	
	legs suspended (women)	taking money for mourning at burials, women singers	demons
	breasts suspended (women)	disregard of husbands, adultery	

*“And Our Lady caught sight of a man hanging by his legs, seized by worms eating his body, and asked the angel, “Who is this man? What kind of sin has he committed?” And the Archistrategos replied, “This is a man who benefited from his gold and silver, thus he is tortured for ever”.*⁵⁰¹

And else: *“And Our Lady caught sight of a woman hanging by her teeth, various snakes creeping out of her mouth and eating her. When seeing this the Virgin asked the angel, “Who is this woman and what kind of sin has she committed?” And the Archistrategos replied, “This woman, my Lady, used to visit her kinsmen and neighbours, kept listening what people say about them, and quarreled with them, gossiping; this is why she is tortured.”*⁵⁰²

⁵⁰¹ *Апокрифы древней Руси* (Санкт-Петербург: АМФОРА, 2002), 162.

⁵⁰² *Апокрифы древней Руси*, op.cit., 162.

Our Lady also sees a metal tree with hooks that replace its branches and a large number of men and women hang on these hooks by tongues. These sinners are the ones who had gossiped against their kinsmen, thus severed relations between brothers and divorced husband and wife⁵⁰³. She sees the torments of clergymen hung by their nails⁵⁰⁴ and of other Christian people.

Thus we get a parallel description of punishment of the sinners besides the previously mentioned material.

Similar details may be found in Christian Apocalypse of Peter (Chapter 6)⁵⁰⁵ and in Dante's Divine Comedy (to be considered succeeding chapter). In Apocalypse of Peter, Christ shows apostle Peter the place of punishment in hell where some sinners are hung by their tongues. These are the ones who had abused the way of righteousness (6:22). Peter sees women hung by their hair over the boiling mud. These are the ones who have committed adultery (6:24).

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 163.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 164.

⁵⁰⁵ Martha Himmelfarb points to a possible influence of 1 Enoch on Apocalypse of Peter because of a strikingly similar description of tour to hell. Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 66-67. See also G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch. A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108* (Minneapolis: 2001), 87.

2. *Arda Wirāz Nāmag* and Dante's Alighieri *Divina Commedia*.

2.1. *Divina Commedia* and various Medieval sources.

Dante's Alighieri famous masterpiece *Divina Commedia* (1308-1321) is a noble part of ongoing discussion in regard to afterlife topical studies⁵⁰⁶. Let us note that Dante's heritage was studied immediately after his death (1321) that is shortly after the *Paradiso* was completed. Usually scholars, so-called dantologists, were leading a debate about the various sources of inspiration on the work of Dante to come to different indeed interesting conclusions while the text was studied in the context of many poetical, philosophical, and even apocalyptic treatises. In this sense, Dante's *Comedy* could had appeared as individualistic and unorthodox for clerics of the period (especially because of placing many former popes in the Inferno and notable heretics in Purgatorio); the earlier commentators of Dante had suggested that the poet would have been dragged before the Inquisition⁵⁰⁷.

It has been assumed that Dante was inspired by the different genres of various medieval sources, including various Jewish, Muslim, and also Christian sectarian writings (heretical works). At least, the poet could had borrowed and transformed several heretical ideas in contrast to a corrupt Church and the emphasis on individual spirituality common to all of the Medieval heresies. Still, it is obvious that Dante made many allusions to the contemporary teachings of Franciscanism⁵⁰⁸, Joachimism, Neoplatonic mysticism, works of Medieval mystics like Dionysius, Eckhart, and Bernard; the above leads to assume that *Commedia* is a synthetical work characteristic of intellectual milieu in the early 14th century when many heterodox spiritual threads of Italian culture had come together⁵⁰⁹. Although

⁵⁰⁶ It is interesting to note that Dante's poem received its present title only two centuries after he wrote it (16th century), but till then was called just *Commedia*, a Medieval literary genre with sad beginning, but happy ending as an opposite to *tragoedia*. See: История зарубежной литературы. Раннее средневековье и возрождение. Под ред. В.М. Жирмунского (Москва: 1959), 219.

⁵⁰⁷ R.V.O'Neill, *Catharism and the Tarot* (2001). Published on site <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2282/sst/cathar9.htm>

⁵⁰⁸ Edmund Gardner suggests in his study that "without Francis, we should have had a different Dante". For further reading please refer to E.G. Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics. A Study of the Mystical Aspect of the Divina Commedia and its Relations with some of its Medieval Sources* (London: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1913), 185.

⁵⁰⁹ R.V.O'Neill, *Catharism and the Tarot*.

Dante was first of all a layman rather than a priest, and a poet rather than a theologian, still he was “*obliged to report his vision in images that he could communicate to his contemporaries*”⁵¹⁰.

On the other hand, most of orientalist (arabists) and muslim scholars are convinced that Dante was drawing upon Quranic motive of prophet Muhammad’s trip across the seven heavens in the chapter about the Night Journey (*Miraj*). And finally, the striking comparative research was performed on Dante’s *Commedia* by several Iranists.

James Robert Russell (basing his assumption on Boyce) is convinced that *Commedia* is the inheritor of the AWN legend through an Islamic intermediary⁵¹¹.

According to Miguel Asin, Dante’s students were digging for enormous amount of Christian literature since the 11th century of the middle ages to find the legends of sea voyages for the genesis of the Divine Comedy; the majority of these legends can be traced back to the preceding Muslim and Oriental tales of the 10th century and earlier⁵¹². Theodore Silverstein suggests that the author of *Divina Commedia* was familiar to some form of the Apocalypse of Paul since the interest in this concept was increased at the 8th century⁵¹³. He writes: „...*Throughout the Latin Middle Ages, the Apocalypse of Paul must have exercised on the popular conceptions of the other-world an influence far more deep-seated than that which is manifest from mere quotation and adaptation*”⁵¹⁴. And further: „*The influence of the Apocalypse of Paul on the popular lore of heaven and hell ceased only when, under the influence of the Renaissance, that lore itself lost its popularity*”⁵¹⁵. Spanish scholar and theologian Miguel Asin also points to the Apocalypse of Paul (dated approximately the 4th cent. C.E.) that was spread and entered Western Christianity in varied literary forms since the 9th century. „*A comparison of later texts with similar Moslem legends,*” he indicates, „*may therefore be of interest as pointing to the hidden channel by which the tale entered Western*

⁵¹⁰ J.B. Russel, *A History of Heaven. The Singing Silence* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 165

⁵¹¹ James Robert Russell, “The Platonic Myth of Er, Armenian Ara, and Iranian Ardāy Wīrāz,” in: *AIS. Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies*, 9. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 29.

⁵¹² Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 204-206.

⁵¹³ Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, 3.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

Europe.”⁵¹⁶ The conclusion is that *Visio Pauli* reached Western Europe in a transformed form „through Moslem adaptations of the Greek Apocalypse”⁵¹⁷. Indeed, Alan Bernstein is convinced that the Vision of Paul impacted Western European imagination in the most powerful and influential way, as it was translated into nearly every vernacular throughout the Middle Ages until Dante and became „the most widely known of all narrative tours of hell”⁵¹⁸. Finally it became and stayed a part of common European folklore, while Dante skillfully adapted its structure for the *Divine Comedy*⁵¹⁹. Most interestingly, when this case is analysed in terms of structure, it is concluded by the scholars that the *Apocalypse of Paul* is of a literary genre common in many Jewish writings and more over, with a specific Iranian setting⁵²⁰.

Interestingly, Dante’s accomplishment is considered a consummation of visionary genre henceforth disappeared from literary mastery⁵²¹. The famous 20th Century Jewish philosopher Martin Buber assumes, that a new concept of universe emerged in post-Augustinian West seemed so real for Medieval Christian that every single reader of *Divina Commedia* descended to the lower circle of hell and ascended through Lucifer’s shaft upwards to Purgatory and reached trinitary dwelling place of God. This was not an expedition to unseen lands, but rather a journey through countries already known for centuries to be a part of the world map. This is to be considered a world, a universe that is closed in itself; finally this is the same ancient Jewish time concept which has now become Christian⁵²².

Dante’s journey in terms of space and time dimensions is expressed as a spiritual pilgrimage, similar to AWN and other otherworldly journeys described so far. According to Burton Russell, poet Dante chooses a traditional form of narrative where the vision is expressed as a voyage. It is a voyage and a vision at the same time that considers St. Paul as a

⁵¹⁶ Miguel Asin, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, 183.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁵¹⁸ Alan Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 293; see also Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 16.

⁵¹⁹ Alan Bernstein, *op.cit.*, 16.

⁵²⁰ E. Albrile, *Zoroaster at Nag-Hammadi*. http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/zoroastian_nag_hammadi.htm

⁵²¹ Eileen Gardiner, ed. *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante* (New York: Italica Press, 1989), XXVII.

⁵²² М. Бубер, *Два образа веры. Проблема человека* (Москва: Издательство «Республика», 1995), 167.

model that “went” and “saw”⁵²³. This is the main characteristic of Medieval visionary journeys. Many of these texts of different European countries origin were preserved in Latin (Latin Medieval visions known as *visiones*). One of the most popular texts is contained in the segments of “Dialogues” (*Dialogorum*) by Gregory the Great. It is defined so far that *visiones* as literary genre has reached its culmination with the Dante’s *Commedia*⁵²⁴.

Figure 9. Dante by Sandro Boticelli



Medieval visionary journeys differ from those described in Pseudepigraphic works in terms of one aspect of the voyage: while in the first the voyager is a holy being, usually a well-known biblical figure (for example, Abraham, Moses), in the last he appears to be a simple human being, and most importantly, a contemporary who is most familiar to the

⁵²³ J.B. Russel, *A History of Heaven*, 155, 156.

⁵²⁴ Восток-Запад. Исследования. Переводы. Публикации. (Москва: «Наука», 1989), 25. See also J.B. Russel, *A History of Heaven*, 99. Let us add that the genre was very popular also in the 15th Century Spain known as *vision* (“vision”), and scholars believe several works were partially influenced by Dante’s “Commedy”. For more details on this see Г.Зеленина, *От скипетра Иуды к железу шута. Придворные евреи в средневековой Испании* (Москва-Иерусалим: «Гешарим», 2007), 124.

readers⁵²⁵. This is also true in regards to Dante's work where a Florentine is lead by Vergil, the most influential poet of ancient Roman world.

**Figure 10. Dante starts his journey to eternity.
Illustration to Divine Comedy by Salvador Dali.**



According to Dante's *Divina Comedia*, there are nine heavens with nine corresponding circles of Hell; nine being the basic number of Dante's otherworld.

Dante's work pictures hell (the Inferno) as a very deep abyss consisting of stages and steps of circular strata with special names and topographical features; each of them in its specific depth corresponding the torture and category of sinners. 9 circles of structured hell are displayed. Dante's Universe in *Commedia* is based upon traditional Medieval

⁵²⁵ А.Б. Грибанов, „Заметки о жанре видений на Западе и Востоке,” in: *Восток-Запад. Исследования. Переводы. Публикации* (Москва: «Наука», 1989), 68. See also Б.И.Ярхо и исследование жанра видений, 28.

astronomical observations. In general, the whole of Dante's hell scheme runs in progress from the highest to the lowest of hells (see Table 16. and 17.).

Table 16. Structure of hell according to Dante's Divina Commedia (by A.Turner)

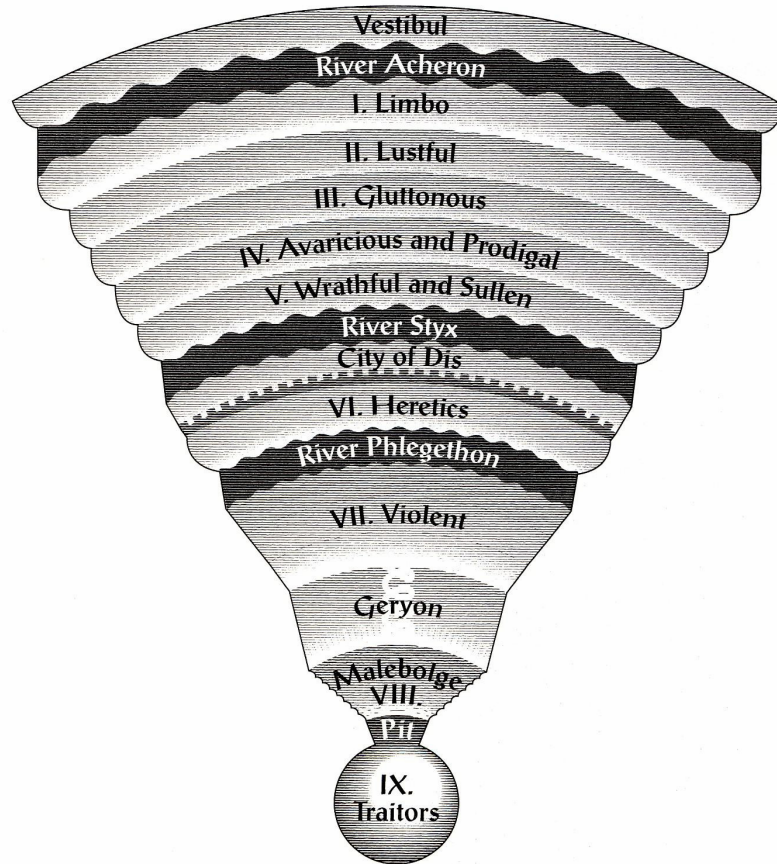


Table 17. Circles of hell according to Dante's Divina Comedia

Title of Inferno circle	Topographical feature	Corresponding category of sinners
1.Limbo	green fields and a castle	Unbaptized and virtuous pagans
2.Lust	terrible winds	Carnal malefactors, adulterers
3.Gluttony	vile slush of icy rain	Greediness and all kinds of addiction
4.Avarice / prodigality	pointless steppe	Clergy addicted to material goods and those spending
5.Wrath / sullenness	swamplike water of Styx	Wrathful and the sullen
6.Heresy	flaming tombs	Various heretis
7.Violence	river / bushes / desert	v. against people and property, suicides, blasphemers
8.Fraud	vast cliffs	Those who commit various forms of conscious fraud
9.Treachery**	lake of ice	Various traitors, home of Lucifer

**The lowest pit of hell

2.2. *Divina Commedia* and the Iranian *Divina Commedia*

Let us now move to consideration of several common topics. Walther Hinz in his research article “Persian Guides for Dante” (*Dantes Persische Verläufer*) continues the research of *Divina Commedia* (the beginning of 14th century) within a close context of Zoroastrian sources. According to Hinz, AWN was one of the main sources of Dante’s inspiration⁵²⁶. This is why AWN is often referred to as the *Iranian Divina Commedia*, a truly Dantesque vision.

Below a brief comparison between the common elements inherent in Dante’s *Commedia* and the Middle Persian AWN is provided.

AWN message was primarily meant for the community that restrained from various transgressions, and when it was read out to community, the listeners weeped and cried in terror with its grim pictures of damnation.

As we saw, there was a common tendency of Zoroastrian texts to describe especially severe punishments as a retributive justice. The souls were punished by the particular demon or noxious creatures (*khrafstars*) and the punishment conformed the sins of an individual. The degree of suffer is directly proportional to the transgression, and the form of punishment meted out likewise corresponds to the various crimes committed in this world⁵²⁷.

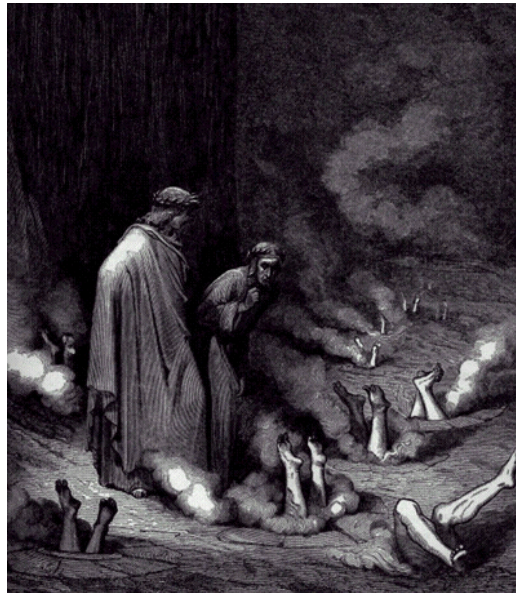
In the *Divina Commedia* the torments of the sinners are not particularly severe. Famous structuralist Yuri Lotman notes, that in Dante’s masterpiece all the sins are divided and in various circles of punishment according to strict rules of the weight of each sin to be equal to the depth of spatial location of a sinner⁵²⁸.

⁵²⁶ Walther Hinz, *Dantes Persische Verläufer*. Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran. Neue Folge 4. (Berlin: 1971), 117.

⁵²⁷ For more detail refer to M.N. Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*. Electronic edition available at <http://www.avesta.org/dhalla/history6.htm#chap44>

⁵²⁸ Ю.М. Лотман, *Непредсказуемые механизмы культуры*. Памяти Юрия Михайловича Лотмана (Тарту: Валгаский архив, 1991), 19.

Figure 11. Virgil watches Dante examine the plight of sinners. Gustave Dore.



In Zoroastrian eschatological concept, the hell is located in the centre of the earth, in the same cavity that was formed when *Ahriman*, the Evil Spirit, left a large hole in the earth when fell down from heavens. Y. Lotman noted that Dante in his *Commedia* moves to the Purgatory through a subterranean passage of hell where are the caves which formed on the fall of Lucifer who was cast out from heaven head-down (Comedy 34:121)⁵²⁹. Similar parallel is found by already referenced O'Neill. He supposes a certain allusion to Gnostic mysticism in Dante's description of Satan (see Comedy 34:121); that based upon the fact that Satan fell to the earth head-down likewise at the pit of the Inferno Dante and his guide Virgil find Lucifer to be embedded headdown when observed from heaven (34:13, 28)⁵³⁰.

Finally, it is interesting to note that within Zoroastrian eschatology, there is a concept of a beautiful maiden who meets the soul of the dead when it crosses the *Chinvat bridge*, should one's good deeds appear to be more significant than evil.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 18, 20.

⁵³⁰ R.V.O'Neill, *Catharism and the Tarot*. Published on site <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2282/sst/cathar9.htm>

This maiden is the manifestation of the soul (conscience, the *Daēnā*) of the righteous as she guides it across the bridge for Paradise. Several parallels of this kind appear also in Manichean literature⁵³¹.

In this regard, a parallel can be established with Beatrice of Dante (Comedy 30:64)⁵³². Let us recall a fact of Dante's biography: Beatrice Portinari (from *beata*, „blessed”) died at the age of 24, namely, at a very young age.

Let me end here.

Figure 11. Dante and Beatrice. Illustration to Divine Comedy by Sandro Botticelli.



⁵³¹ Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 46-48.

⁵³² Б.Дж.Рассел, *Дьявол*, 137.

Major conclusions from *Part II-VI*.

Conclusions on the first part of the present thesis are given at the end of Part I and extended in Part V; this section therefore includes the conclusions related to the particular chosen texts.

First of all, let me stress out that I haven't noticed any specific objections to the inclusion of distinct aspects of Zoroastrian religious and demonological thinking into other philosophical or legendary systems. This would be very much likely in case the former ones demonstrate the exclusiveness of binding and unique concepts.

The legendary traditions on otherworldly journeys were preserved in Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian and Muslim texts alike. We may find many striking similarities amongst them. What questions can be raised and conclusions drawn, taking into consideration that texts can be dated surviving from earlier and later centuries? In general, I am convinced that the majority of the topics we discussed in this investigation are of special interest in the early Middle Ages as it demonstrates how rich textual tradition (Zoroastrian-Jewish-Muslim) was *viva voce* transmitted over a communication among ordinary travelers or pilgrims. Dynamics reflected inside "the tours of hell" themselves, to use *Himmelfarb* genre terminology, points to expressing vision in a form of a journey and vice versa. The tours of hell put down in a form of a journey as a dynamic-dramatic model comprises two main features – travelogue (similar to Medieval travel itinerary) and dialogue (between a seer/ hero and his guide).

Although the present study is primarily concerned with the comparison of Zoroastrian AWN and several Medieval Jewish visionary texts about hell punishment features, it was impossible to exclude the consideration of common Muslim and Christian traditional texts that reveal elaborated imagery or comprise similar elements and concepts. The earliest preserved text to comprise the *tour of hell* is found in the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch, 3rd Cent B.C.E.); similar elements are referenced in Zoroastrian AWN acknowledged to be dated in oral circulation in the 2nd millennium BCE and of written earliest between the 4th and 7th centuries CE and latest between the 9th and 13th centuries) and later on specified in other Zoroastrian texts from 9th century and including: *Bundahišn*, *Denkārd*, *Dadestan-I-Denig*, *Mainyo-I-Khard*, Medieval literary accomplishments such as the Judeo-Persian Midrash on the Ascension of Moses, *Gedulat Moshe* (the earliest dated by the first half of the 13th

century) and Muslim legends of Nocturnal Journey (*Miraj*). In addition, several Medieval Jewish midrashic texts were examined, including the tractates *Orot Hayyim* (“Lights of Life”) and *Masekhet Gehinnom* (“Tractate of Hell”), *Gan Eden ve Gehinnom* (“Garden of Eden and Hell”), Christian visionary literature as the Apocalypse of Paul (*Visio Sancti Pauli*) and the Apocalypse of Peter (both Nag-Hammadi Gnostic texts with distinct Zoroastrian elements!) and Medieval Old Slavonic apocryphon “Weeping of Our Lady”.

The summary of my conclusions is as follows:

1. The main thesis of the present doctoral research attempts to research the resemblance of Jewish Medieval tours of hell concepts to the notions of AWN and other Pahlavi texts composed during the Sasanid period in Iran (226 C.E. – 651 C.E.) and put in written form up till the 9th century C.E.
2. Paradoxically, the later Muslim hagiography is shaped according to popular Zoroastrian lore, as the life stories of Muhammad and Zarathushtra are described in the similar manner and reveal common issues of revelatory visions and prophetic missions;
3. The legitimization of Muhammad within the preceding biblical, Judeo-Christian and Zoroastrian schemes of prophetic succession explains similarities between Muslim and Zoroastrian as well as Jewish visionary accounts on the Ascension of a prophet, whether Muhammad, Arda Wirāz or Moses (ref. to the textual demonstration on *Miraj*, *AWN* and *Gedulat Moshe*); in general, this strategy is typical of Pseudepigraphal line of tradition;
4. The supplement of Zoroastrian concept of prophecy as an established oracular tradition in its apocalyptic form that took place between the 12th and 14th centuries gave a rise to Jewish messianism, Christian apocryphal tales and Mandaean apocalyptic literature and revived blended prophetic and apocalyptic narratives (for a comparison, see **point 1.,3. and 5.** of part V of the dissertation);
5. The following texts are examined in detail in regard to the specifics of hell punishments:

- a. from corpus of Zoroastrian [mostly Pahlavi] texts: *Arda Wirāz* („The Book of Righteous Wiraz”), *Bundahišn* (“Creation”), *Dadestan-i Denig* (“Religious Judgments”), *Dēnkard* (“Acts of Faith”, “Acts of Religion”), *Vendidād* (“Law against the Demons”, an Avestan book);
 - b. from Medieval Jewish midrashic texts: out of BHM (collection of midrashic texts edited by Adolph Jellinek) several are examined including *Orot Hayyim* (Tractate “Lights of Life”), *Otzar Midrashim* (“Treasury of Midrashim”), *Masekhet Gehinnom* (“Tractate of Hell”), *Gan Eden we Gehinnom* (Tractate “Garden of Eden and Hell”), *Gedulat Moshe* (“The Revelation of Moses”) and Judeo-Persian version of Hebrew midrash, originally known as ‘*Aliyat Moshe le-marom*, “Moses’ Ascension on High”;
6. While exploring sequential sources that transmit similar motives, the texts of Christian visionary literature including the Apocalypse of Paul (*Visio Sancti Pauli*), the Apocalypse of Peter (Nag-Hammadi Gnostic texts), Medieval Old Slavonic apocryphon “Weeping of Our Lady” (Russian: *Хождение Богородицы по мукам*) were examined; Medieval Muslim *hadiths* (legends) and Dante’s “Divine Comedy” (*Divina Commedia*) and other relevant material is inspected;
 7. Detailed text based analysis indicates that *tours of hell* (descriptions on hell punishments that use a principle of retaliation (*talion*) as means of reward) in Zoroastrian texts (especially AWN) are exclusively vivid with distinct Zoroastrian elements (torture of cold, hell located in northern regions, torturing creatures) when compared to identical Jewish, and other texts drawing on the same traditions (incl. several Christian and Muslim texts of the same period) of hell tours;
 8. To serve as an important aspect in terms of the continuity of the topic, Medieval Muslim *hadiths* (legends such as *Miraj*) were collected by scholars of strong Zoroastrian Iranian background;
 9. Judeo-Christian tradition in regard to *tours of hell* represents the form of „demonstrative explanations” (Himmelfarb’s terminology) which originated in

Mesopotamian literature; they are the common form of expression in Judeo-Christian and Zoroastrian visionary literature;

10. The comparison of AWN and Jewish Medieval midrashim on separate elements in details of hell punishments of tours include identical or similar spatial and temporal measurements (direction north, various distances measured in hell), as well as hanging punishments, torturing creatures and torturing mechanism (torture by cold and fire, etc.).
11. All the above points are supported by corresponding dating of the texts of both traditions.

Acknowledgements

„Only the Spirit, if it breathe upon the clay, can create Man.” This is how Saint-Exupéry ends his *Wind, Sand, and Stars* (1939). At the end of this work I would like to give thanks first of all, to the Lord who was leading me unto His inscrutable ways and provided all the necessary things, making my own way simpler than it seemed at the very beginning.

This dissertation can be considered the *summa theologica*, or more precisely, *summa eschatologica* (all things eschatological) of my years of study at the Faculty of Theology.

I am personally indebted to those who largely influenced my deep interest in related subjects.

I am grateful to Latvian professor **Visvaldis Varnesis Klive** (1931-2003) who gave very interesting courses on World Religions during my Bachelor's studies at the University of Latvia Faculty of Theology, from whence came my first knowledge about Zoroastrianism. Further, interest has grown due to a professional contact with a researcher on Central Asian studies from Tashkent (Uzbekistan) **Bahodir Sidikov** whom I met in Moscow in 2001 during a Judaica conference and later through **Prof. Dan Shapira** (Department of Near Eastern History at Bar-Ilan University, Israel) during courses related to Judaism-Zoroastrianism interaction (Summer and Winter schools in Judaica, Moscow). Although I don't pretend to be a specialist in the field of Irano-Judaica, this research has brought to some binding conclusions which can lead towards a path of deeper investigations in terms of Zoroastrian-Jewish relations. My interest in the above topic had started already at the time of my Master's thesis when I was researching the afterlife concepts in Pseudepigraphal and apocryphal literature. As I proceeded my interest only grew: this topic was initiated back in 2003 as an independent research project at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (the international "Eshnav" program for young scholars). Thus, the whole research period can be estimated of 6-7 years in total, yet with some insignificant interruptions. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor emeritus **Shaul Shaked** at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel), a rare specialist of Jewish-Zoroastrian contacts at the end of the Sasanian period, for his very important advices on how to proceed with research on Judaism-Zoroastrianism encounters. He was also very eager to pass several research articles and

papers on the subject of his authorship written during past decades. And I would like to thank his former doctoral student **D. Shapira** for consultations and assistance, for providing reasonable amount of scholarly publications for my research from its very beginning since Shapira's visiting lectures in Moscow. Let me express my sincere thanks also to the University of Latvia for supporting my studies and giving a possibility to acquire a small library of recent publications on the topic, as well as the Rothschild Foundation Europe (UK) and Nippon foundation which supported my research trips in favour of writing this dissertation.

To my colleagues **Prof. Ruvim Ferber** and **Prof. Aivars Stranga** (Center for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia) who encouraged me to enroll further in doctoral studies by all means and inspired to do a research on a subject of my interest as well as supported my efforts during studies.

It is my mother **Silvija** whom I shall gratefully appreciate for supporting me during these years and checking the English manuscript of this dissertation when it was finally completed.

Finally, my thanks shall be said to bibliophile **Avraham** from Jerusalem for selling me a full edition of Adolph Jellinek's *Beth Hamidrash* (Jerusalem, 1938) on the very last day of my stay in Israel, since I've been searching for this release for a very long time.

Selected Bibliography

- Albrile, E. *Zoroaster at Nag-Hammadi*. http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/zoroastian_nag_hammadi.htm
- Alger, W.R. *The Destiny of the Soul. A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*. Project Gutenberg, 2006. EBook No.19082 at www.gutenberg.org
- Apinis, Valts. *Nāve un apbedīšanas tradīcijas Vecajā Derībā*. Bachelor's thesis Riga: Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia, 2000.
- Apinis, Valts. *Concepts of Death and Afterlife in Jewish Pseudepigraphic Literature*. Master's Thesis. Riga: Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia, 2003.
- Apinis, Valts. "The Attitude of the Rabbinic Tradition towards the Pseudepigraphal Writings concerning the Afterlife." In *Proceedings of the 9th Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference on Jewish Studies* Moscow: SEFER, 2002.
- Apinis, Valts. *Eshatoloģija Augustīna darbā "Dieva pilsēta" (De Civitate Dei)*. Unpublished manuscript, Riga, June 20, 1998.
- Ara, Mitra. *Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Traditions. The Genesis and Transformation of a Doctrine*. American University Studies. Series VII. Theology and Religion. Vol.275. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008.
- Asin, Miguel. *Islam and the Divine Comedy*. New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2002.
- Astren, Fred. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Medieval Jewish Studies: Methods and Problems*. In *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8, 2. Leiden: BRILL NV, 2001.
- Bailey, J.W. "The Temporary Messianic Reign in the Literature of Early Judaism". In *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol.53. New York-London: Society of Biblical Literature, 1934.
- Barrera, J.T. *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible. An Introduction to the History of the Bible*. Leiden-New York-Köln: BRILL, 1998.
- Bauckham, Richard. *The Fate of the Dead. Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum. Vol. 93. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008.
- Bernstein, Alan. *The Formation of Hell. Death and Retribution in the Ancient and early*

- Christian Worlds*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Bickerman, Elias. *The Historical Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism*. Article is taken from Boyce, M. and Grenet, F. *A History of Zoroastrianism*. Vol.3. Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule. Handbuch der Orientalistik. Erste Abteilung Der Nahe Und Der Mittlere. Leiden-New York-Kobenhavn-Koln: Brill Academic Publishers, 1991.
- Boyce, M. *A History of Zoroastrianism*. Vol.1. The Early Period. // Handbuch der Orientalistik. Leiden-New York-Kobenhavn-Köln: E.J.BRILL, 1989.
- Boyce, Mary. *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.
- Bundy, "Pseudepigrapha in Syriac Literature," in *Society of Biblical Literature*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991.
- Carter, George William *Zoroastrianism and Judaism*. Boston: The Gorham Press, 1918.
- Charles, R.H. *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*. London: Clarendon, 1913.
- Choksy, J.K. *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Cohn, N. *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: the Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Collins, J.J. "The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature". *Death and Afterlife in the Early Rabbinic Sources: the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Early Midrash Compilations*, Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner, eds. In: *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Part 4.: Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection and the World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity. Leiden-Boston-Köln: BRILL, 2000.
- Collins, J.J. "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End". // *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Vol.1. The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity. New York: Continuum, 1999.
- Daryaee, Touraj. *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2008. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/latvia/Doc?id=10310815>
- De Jong, Albert. "Zoroastrian Ideas about the Time before Zaratustra." In *Genesis and Regeneration. Essays on Conceptions of Origins*, ed. S.Shaked. Jerusalem: The Israel

- Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2005.
- De Vaux, Roland. *Ancient Israel – its Life and Institutions*. London: McGraw Hill, 1961.
- Dhalla, M.N. *History of Zoroastrianism*. 1938. This electronic edition copyright 2004 by Joseph H. Peterson and Soli Dastur. <http://www.avesta.org/dhalla/history6.htm#chap44>
- Finkelstein, L., ed. *The Jews. Their History, Culture, and Religion*. 3rd edition. Vol.I. The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966.
- Foltz, Richard.C. *Religions of the Silk Road. Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*. New York: St.Martin's Griffin. 1999.
- Foltz, Richard.C. *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble. How Iran Shaped the World's Religions*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008.
- Foltz, Richard.C. *The Role of Central Asian Peoples in the Spread of World Religions*. Article published on-line at http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/iranian/role_central_asian_spread_religion.htm
- Fosdick H.E. *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*. New York: 1956.
- Franck, Adolph. *The Kabbalah or the Religious Philosophy of the Hebrews*. New York: The Kabbalah Publishing Company, 1926. Full text available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/rph/rph22.htm>
- Fröhlich, I. „Time and Times and Half a Time. Historical Consciousness in the Jewish Literature of the Persian and Hellenistic Eras”. In *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 19*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- Frye, R.N. *Qumran and Iran. Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. J.Neusner. In *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Vol.12. Leiden: E.J.BRILL, 1975.
- Gardner, E.G. *Dante and the Mystics. A Study of the Mystical Aspect of the Divina Commedia and its Relations with some of its Medieval Sources*. Elibron Classics. Adamant Media Corporation, 2006. Reprinted from J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1913.
- Garthwaite, G.R. *The Persians*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Gaster, Moses. *Studies and Texts in Folk-lore, Magic, Romances, Apocrypha*. Vol.1. London: Maggs Bros., 1925-1928.

- Ginzberg, L. "Some Observations on the Attitude of the Synagogue towards the Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings". In *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol.41. New York/London: Ktav pub., 1922.
- Ginzberg, L. "The Legends of the Jews". Vol.I-VII. Philadelphia, 1961.
- Ginzberg, L. An Unknown Jewish Sect. Moreshet Series, Vol.I. Studies in Jewish History, Literature and Thought. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 5736-1976.
- Hasan-Rokem, G. *Web of Life. Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Herford, Robert Travers. *Talmud and Apocrypha. A Comparative Study of the Jewish Ethical Teaching in the Rabbinical and Non-rabbinical Sources in the Early Centuries*. New York:: Ktav Pub Inc., 1971.
- Himmelfarb, Martha. *The Apocalypse: A Brief History*. Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Himmelfarb, Martha "R. Moses the Preacher and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs." In *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 9. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Himmelfarb, Martha. *Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the Hekhalot Literature*. Hebrew Union College Annual. Vol.51. Cincinnati, 1988.
- Himmelfarb, Martha. *Tours of Hell: an Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.
- Himmelfarb, Martha. *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*. New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Hinnells, J.R. *Persian Mythology*. The Library of the World's Myths and Legends. London: Chancelor Press, 1997.
- Hinz, W. "Dantes Persische Verläufer". In *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, Neue Folge 4. Berlin, 1971.
- Hultgard, A. "Persian Apocalypticism" in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Collins, J.J., ed. New York, 1989.
- Inostranzev, M. *Iranian Influence on Moslem Literature*. Part I. E-book, 2004. Taken from:

<http://www.scribd.com/> Original - Konstanty Aleksandrovich Inostrantsev, *Iranian Influence on Moslem Literature*, Part I, trans. G. K. Nariman (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co, 1918). E-book, 2004 taken from: <http://www.scribd.com/>

Jahanian, D. *The Zoroastrian Doctrine and Biblical Connections*. Kansas: D.Jahanian, 1997.

Jellinek, A. *Preface to the German Translation of the First French Edition. The Kabbalah or the Religious Philosophy of the Hebrews by Adolph Franck*. New York: The Kabbalah Publishing Company, 1926. Full text available at http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/rph/rph06.htm#page_xix

Khanbaghi, A. *The Fire, the Star and the Cross. Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran*. London-New York: I.B.TAURIS, 2006.

Kuhn H.B. "The Angelology of the Non-Canonical Jewish Apocalypses," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol.69. New York/London: 1948.

Le Goff, J. *The Birth of Purgatory*. Trans. by Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Lieberman, Shaul. „On Sins and their Punishments.” In *Texts and Studies* No 86. New York: Ktav, 1974.

Magee, M. D. *Persia and Creation of Judaism*. Book 2. How Persia Created Judaism. Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism and Christianity. Part I. See http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/non-iranian/Judaism/Persian_Judaism/Persia_created_judaism.htm//

Martínez, Florentino García. *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran*. Leiden-New York-Köln: E.J.BRILL, 1992.

Moazami, M. *Millennialism, Eschatology, and Messianic Figures in Iranian Tradition*. Full text from: <http://www.bu.edu/mille/publications/winter2000/moazami.PDF>

Modi, J.J. *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*. Bombay: 1922. <http://www.avesta.org/ritual/rcc.htm#chap3>

Momigliano Arnaldo, "Religion in Athens, Rome and Jerusalem in the First Century BC. Approaches to Ancient Judaism." in *Studies in Judaism and its Greco-Roman Context*. Vol.5. Atlanta: 1985.

Neusner, J. *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*. Vol. IV. The Age of Shapur II. Leiden: E.J.BRILL, 1969.

Murphy, F.J. "The Temple in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch." In *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106/4. New York/London: 1987.

- Neusner, J, ed. "Early Rabbinic Judaism. Historical Studies in Religion, Literature and Art," in *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Vol.XIII. Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1975.
- Neusner, J. , ed. *Talmudic Judaism in Sasanian Babylonia*. Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1976.
- Neusner, J. *Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism in Talmudic Babylonia*. London: University Press of America, 1986.
- Neusner, J. *Judaism and Zoroastrianism at the Dusk of Late Antiquity: How Two Ancient Faiths Wrote Down Their Great Traditions*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993.
- Panaino, A. "Lunar and Snake Omens among the Zoroastrians". In IJS Studies in Judaica. Conference Proceedings of the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London. Vol.4. OFFICINA MAGICA. Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity. Shaked, S., ed. Leiden-Boston: BRILL, 2005.
- Patai, R. *A Book of Jewish Legends: Gates to the Old City*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981.
- Pavry, J.D.C. *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life: From Death to the Individual Judgment*. 2nd Edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1929.
- Raphael, S.P. *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*. Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.
- Rowland, C. *The Open Heaven. A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*. London: The Camelot Press Ltd, 1985.
- Russell, David Syme, *Between the Testaments*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1960.
- Russell, J.R. Armenian and Iranian Studies [AIS]. Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Russell, J.B. *A History of Heaven. The Singing Silence*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Russell, J.R. "On Mysticism and Esotericism among the Zoroastrians". In AIS. Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Russell, J.R. "The Platonic Myth of Er, Armenian Ara, and Iranian Ardāy Wīrāz". In AIS. Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.

- Russell, J.R. „Ezekiel and Iran.” In *AIS*, Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Rustomji, N. *The Garden and the Fire. Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Saifullah, M.S.M. *Arda Wiraz Namag (Iranian “Divina Commedia”) and The Prophet’s Night Journey*. See on-line: <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/Quran/Sources/ZRisra.html>
- Sassoon, J. *Ancient Laws and Modern Problems. The Balance between Justice and a Legal System*. London: Third Millennium Publishing, 2001.
- Schwarzbaum, Haim. *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk Literature*. Waldorf-Hessen: Verlag für Orientkunde Dr. H. Vordran, 1982.
- Segal, A.F. “Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment.” In *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*. 23.Band. Vorkonstantinisches Christentum: Verhältnis zu Römischer Staat und Heidnischer Religion. Berlin, New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1980.
- Segal A.F. “Two Powers in Heaven. Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism”. In *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Vol.25. Leiden: BRILL, 1977.
- Segal A.F. *Life After Death. A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West*. N.Y.-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland: Doubleday, 2004.
- Segal A.F. “Religious Experience and the Construction of the Transcendent Self”. In *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. De Conick. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.
- Shaked, S. “First Man, First King. Notes on Semitic-Iranian Syncretism and Iranian Mythological Transformations.” In *GILGUL*. Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions. Leiden-New York-Kopenhagen-Köln: E.J.BRILL, 1987.
- Shaked, S. “The Notions *mēnōg* and *gētīg* in the Pahlavi texts and their relation to eschatology.” Reprinted from *Acta Orientalia* XXXIII (1971).
- Shaked, S., *Eschatology in Zoroastrian Religion*. Article published on-line at http://www.cais-soas.com/cais/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/zoroastrian_eschatology.htm
- Shaked, S., ed. *Genesis and Regeneration. Essays on Conceptions of Origins*. Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2005.

- Shaked, S. "Two Types of Esotericism". In *Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation*. V. Band 1. Geheimnis und Öffentlichkeit. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1997.
- Silverstein, T. *Visio Sancti Pauli: the History of the Apocalypse in Latin, Together With Nine Texts*. In *Studies and Documents IV*, ed. Kirsopp Lake. London: Christopher's, 1935.
- Stone, M. *Scriptures, Sects and Visions. A Profile of Judaism from Ezra to the Jewish Revolts*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.
- Stroumsa, G.G. "A Zoroastrian Origin to the Sefirot?" In *Irano - Judaica III*. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer, eds. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994
- Stroumsa, G.G. "Mystical Descents". In *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*. John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane, eds., New York: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Stroumsa, G.G. "Thomas Hyde and the Birth of Zoroastrian Studies". Offprint from *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 26, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Faculty of Humanities, 2002.
- Stroumsa, G.G. "Gnosis and Judaism in Nineteenth Century Christian Thought." In *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*. Vol.2. Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992.
- Taivans, L.G. *Teoloģijas vēsture I. Pirmkristīgo laikmets*. A.D. 1-313. Rīga: "Ceļš", LU Teoloģijas fakultātes izdevniecība, 1995.
- Tisdall, C. *The Originbal Sources of the Quran*. London - New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1905. On-line text:
http://www.muhammadanism.org/Tisdall/sources_quran/default.htm
- Turner, A.K. *The History of Hell*. New York-San Diego-London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993.
- Wallach L. "A Jewish Polemic against Gnosticism". In *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol.65. New York/London: Society of Biblical Literature, 1946.
- Waterhouse, J.W. *Zoroastrianism*. San Diego, California: The Book Tree, 2006.
- Wheeler, Henry Robinson. *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd, 1956.
- Wright, J.E. *The Early History of Heaven*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Васильев, Л.С. *История Религий Востока*. Москва: «Вышшая школа», 1988.
- Гафни, Исаия. *Евреи Вавилонии в талмудическую эпоху*. Перевод с иврита М.Навона и Ю.Шлайфмана. Москва-Иерусалим: «Гешарим», 2003.

- Грейвс Р., Патай Р. *Иудейские Мифы*. Книга Бытия. Москва: Б.С.Г.–ПРЕСС, 2002.
- Грибанов, А.Б. *Заметки о жанре видений на Западе и Востоке*. Восток-запад. Исследования. Переводы. Публикации. Москва: «Наука», 1989.
- Де ля Соссей, Шантепи. *Иллюстрированная История Религий*. Москва: Российский Фонд Мира, 1992.
- Клемен, К. *Жизнь мертвых в религиях человечества*. Москва: «Интрада», 2002.
- Крюкова, В.Ю. *Смерть и похоронный обряд в зороастризме*. СПб.: Центр «Петербургское Востоковедение», 1997.
- Мень, Александр. *История Религии*. Том 5. Москва: Издательство Советско-Британского совместного предприятия «СЛОВО», 1992.
- Милитарев, А.Ю. *Воплощенный миф*. Москва: Издательство «Наталис», 2003.
- Фильштинский, И.М. *Представление о «Потустороннем мире» в арабской мифологии литературы*. Восток-запад. Исследования. Переводы. Публикации. Москва: «Наука», 1989.
- Рассел, Б.Дж. *Дьявол. Восприятие зла с древнейших времен до раннего христианства*. СПб.: «Евразия», 2001.
- Шинан, Авиغدор. *Мир агадической литературы*. Иерусалим: Библиотека-Алия, 1990.
- Шиффман, Лоуренс. *От текста к традиции. История иудаизма в эпоху Второго Храма и период Мишны и Талмуда*. Перевод с англ. А.М.Сиверцева. Москва-Иерусалим: «Гешарим», 2000.
- Шолем, Гершом. *Основные течения в еврейской мистике*. Иерусалим: издательство «Библиотека-Алия», 1993.

Source texts, anthologies

Hell-on-line. A developing comprehensive on-line collection of over 100 visions, tours and descriptions of the infernal otherworld. Created and Maintained by Eileen Gardiner, 2008.

<http://www.hell-on-line.org/index.html>

Jellinek, Adolph, ed., *Bet ha-Midrash: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der jüdischen Literatur* [BHM]. 6 vols. Leipzig, 1853-77; repr., Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrman, 1938.

- Reeves, John C., ed. *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic. A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.
- Haug M., trans. and Asa, H.Jamasp, ed. *The Book of Arda Viraf*. Bombay and London: GOVERNMENT CENTRAL BOOK MESSRS. TRUBNER AND CO., 1872.
- Vahman, F., ed. *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag. The Iranian "Divina Comedia"*. In *Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies. Monograph Series. No.53*. London and Malmo: Curzon Press Ltd., 1986.
- Moreen, Vera Basch, transl. *A Midrash on the Ascension of Moses*. In *In Queen Esther's Garden. An Anthology of Judeo-Persian Literature. Yale Judaica Series, Vol.XXX*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Пехлевийская Божественная Комедия. Книга о праведном Виразе и другие тексты. Паметники письменности Востока СХХVI*. Москва: «Восточная литература», 2001.
- Boyce Mary, trans.and ed. *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*. Textual Sources for the Study of Religion. Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Seguy, Marie-Rose. *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet: Miraj Nameh*: Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris (Manuscrit Supplement Turn 190). New York: George Braziller, 1977.
- Gardiner, Eileen, ed. *Zoroastrian Hell. Visions, Tours and Descriptions of the Infernal Otherworld*. New York: Italica Press, 2006.
- Gardiner, Eileen, ed. *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*. New York: Italica Press, 1989.
- Charles, Robert Henry, ed. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, Vol. 1-2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Charlesworth, J.H., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol.1. Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments. New York: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Gaster, M. *Studies and Texts in Folk-Lore, Magic, Romances, Apocrypha*. Vol.1. London: Maggs Bros, 1925-1928.
- Mirsky, M., Stern D., eds. *Rabbinic Fantasies. Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature*. Philadelphia, New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990.
- Wuensche, A. *Aus Israels Lehrhallen. Band III: Kleine Midraschim zur jüdischen Eschatologie und Apokalyptik*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967. [A translation of collections of Jellinek's BHM into German.]

Апокрифы древней Руси. Санкт-Петербург: АМФОРА, 2002.

Алигьери, Данте. *Божественная Комедия.* Перевод М.Лозинского. Москва., 1982.

Dictionaries

Encyclopedia of Early Christianity. Vol.2., ed. Everett Ferguson. New York and London: Grand Publishing, Inc., 1997.

The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol.1, Atlanta: Doubleday, 1992.