

## ARE THE JEWISH PARADISE AND HELL COMPARABLE TO THOSE IN ISLAM?

AVIHAI SHIVTIEL

*University of Cambridge*

The concepts concerning the Day of Judgement, Reward and Punishment, Immortality of the Soul, Resurrection, Reincarnation, and, of course Paradise and Hell are generally shared by Judaism and Islam, as part of their view of eschatology. That is to say, the idea of life after death and the pleasures of Paradise, as opposed to the sufferings in Hell, are repeatedly emphasized by the two religions, giving the believers of the two faiths something to look for and to look forward to, a hope to cling to, thus reducing the psychological fear of death and the dread of the unknown world to come, which is shrouded in mystery, so to speak.

Judaism has many names and epithets for Paradise, such as

*gan ʿeden* (= Garden of Eden);  
*ha-ʿolam ha-ba* (= the World to come);  
*ʿolam ha-emet* (= the World of truth);  
*ʿolam she-kullo tov* (= the World that all of it is good);  
*shamayim* (= Heaven), and even  
*Yerushalayim shel maʿla* (= Upper Jerusalem);  
*ʿolam she-kullo shabbat* (= a world that all of it is Sabbath) and  
*heiḳo shel Avraham avinu* (= the bosom of Abraham, our Father).

In medieval poetry the plurals *gan ʿadanim*, *ginnat ʿadanim* and *gannei ʿadanim* are also found (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:4340, “ʿeden”).

Hell is called in Hebrew tradition *gei Hinnom* (= the valley of Hinnom) or *gei Ben Hinnom* (the valley of the Son of Hinnom), which was originally a name of a place situated south-west of Jerusalem, near the east gate of the Old City, and which, according to the Book of Jeremiah (7:31-32; 19:2; 32:35) and the Second Book of Chronicles (28:3; 33:6), was the place where children were sacrificed, mainly by their parents, to the god Molekh). Other biblical synonymous names for Hell are *Tofet*, *Gei ha-haregah* (= Valley of Slaughter), *sheol*,

*shahat, dumah, tsalmavet* and *avadon*. It is this concept of Hell that later developed in Judaism to mean the place where the sinners are punished after their death. Thus, we find in the Book of Isaiah (14: 4-24) a vivid description of the descending of the King of Babel from heaven, his high position, to *sheol* (Hell), which receives him with fury. Another biblical name '*azazel*', which was later associated with Hell, derives its meaning from the name of a place to which the scapegoat was sent away, carrying with it all the sins committed by the Israelites that were consequently atoned.

According to post-biblical sources, Hell has seven names: *sheol, avadon, beer shahat, bor shaon, tit ha-yeven, tsalmavet* and *erets tahtit*. (*ᵀEruvin*, 19a). Other names are *bakha, emek ha-bakha, ᵀevrah, ᵀaluqah, ᵀeleq, puqah, ur, tsar* and *kaf* or *kaf ha-qela'* (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:755-756).

However, it is intriguing that in spite of the fact that the Old Testament speaks of the Day of God, the Day of Judgement and Reward and Punishment, it makes no reference to Paradise or Hell as the final destinations of the souls. Instead, *gan ᵀeden* is only the Garden of Eden in which Adam and Eve had dwelt until their expulsion. It is also used as a simile to denote a flourishing place (*Ez.* 36:35). *Ha-ᵀolam ha-ba* (= the World to come) is also not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The Apocrypha and the Dead Sea Scrolls refer, however, albeit seldom, to Paradise, and mainly to Hell.

Post-biblical literature, such as, the *Talmud*, the *Midrash*, the *Aggadah*, the *Kabbalah* and many writings by Medieval and post-Medieval Jewish authors and thinkers largely refer to the World to come, whether Paradise or Hell, providing minute details, regarding their 'inhabitants' and their 'agenda'<sup>1</sup>. In brief, they all claim that God created Paradise for the righteous (*Yevamot* 47a), whereas Hell was created for the wicked (*Hagigah*, 15a; *ᵀEruvin*, 19a). A man has the choice between Paradise and Hell (*Berakhot*, 28b), and his deeds in the present world will determine which of them he will reach after his death (*Yer. Peah* 16b), although R. Yohanan ben Zakkai was not sure to where he would be led (*Berakhot* 28b). One may, however, conclude from a eulogy where exactly a deceased person will end up in (*Shabbat*, 153a).

The *Mishnah*, incidentally, has only one reference to the Garden of Eden<sup>2</sup> and five references to Hell: The sinners are tried in Hell (*ᵀEduyyot* 2:10); The disciples of Bilᵀam reach it (*Avot* 5:19); The arrogant dwells in Hell (*Avot* 5:20); he who speaks at great length with a woman "will inherit Hell" (*Avot* 1:5) and the best physician will end up in Hell (*Qiddushin* 4:14, 66b). Incidentally, only few commentaries and late *responsa* provide us with an explanation for this odd

<sup>1</sup> See *Aggadah* 444-446 and examples below.

<sup>2</sup> A shy person reaches it (*Avot*, 5:20).

statement. They basically claim that the reason for why the best doctors should go to Hell is because doctors often do not study the illness carefully but rely too much on themselves. Consequently, negligence and wrong treatment may prove fatal. Another reason is that some doctors refuse to treat the poor who cannot afford paying them a fee<sup>3</sup>.

According to the *Talmud*, the Garden of Eden was created before the whole Universe (*Pesahim*, 52a; *Nedarim*, 39b). Some believe that it was created on Tuesday (*Bereshit Rabbah*, 15,3), probably because the Scriptures use uniquely the word *tov* (“good”) twice with reference to the things which were created on Tuesday, but not in the context of other days. Furthermore, Paradise is the symbol of abundance and affluence and the whole world ‘drinks’ from it (*Ta’anit*, 10a), and in particular the people of the Kingdom of Sheba (*Aggadah*, 96). Moreover, since the only place where Adam was truly happy was in the Garden of Eden (*Sanhedrin*, 59b), it is only natural that the righteous will be transferred to Paradise after their death. This will be their reward (*Ta’anit*, 11a). The notion of the return to Paradise, being the eternal place of utmost happiness, symbolizes in Judaism ‘closing of the circle’: a departure from a place of goodness and prosperity (= Paradise), passing through suffering and struggle (= this world) and then returning to Paradise.

### Who reaches Paradise?

Surely the righteous who purposely suffer in this world in order to reach Paradise (*Qiddushin*, 40b), since God granted the Israelites three things through suffering: the *Torah*, the land of Israel and the world to come (*Berakhot*, 5a). And more specifically, he who lives in Erets Israel, uses the holy tongue, earns his living honestly and recites the prayer “Hearken O’ Israel” (*Sheqalim*, 3,3). Moreover, it suffices for a person to walk four yards in Erets Israel to reach Paradise. Even a Canaanite slave-girl who lives in Erets Israel will reach the next world (*Ketubbot*, 111a).

Also the following will reach Paradise:

- He who relies on and trusts in God (*Menahot*, 29b).
- He who prays daily (*Berakhot*, 4b).
- He who says ‘Amen’ loudly after benedictions (*Shabbat*, 119b).
- He who gives money to charity (*Pesahim*, 8a).
- He who respects his parents (*Yerushalmi*, *Peah*, 81a).
- He who respects his friend (*Berakhot* 28b).

<sup>3</sup> See *Qiddushin* 4:14 and Rashi’s commentary *ad. loc.*

- He who fulfils even one command of God, the command welcomes him in the World to come (*Sota*, 3b).
- He who considers himself inferior to the Torah, like a slave in respect of his master (*Bava Metsia*, 85b).
- He who praises the Lord in this world will continue to do so in Paradise (*Sanhedrin*, 91b).
- He who teaches the law in this world will continue to teach it in the next (*Ibid.*).
- He who leads the community gently in this world, will continue to do it in the next (*Sanhedrin*, 92a).
- He who starves himself for the sake of the Torah the Lord will make him content in the next world (*Sanhedrin*, 100a).
- He who blackens his face in this world for the sake of the Torah, the Lord will brighten his face in the next world (*Ibid.*).
- Students of the Torah (*Bava Batra*, 10a) and their wives (*Ketubbot*, 62a) who do not sleep in order to study more will enjoy the glory of God in the world to come (*Bava Batra*, 10a).
- He who only dreams that he makes love to a married woman (*Berakhot*, 57a).

In brief, all the Israelites have a place in the next world (*Sanhedrin*, 104a), and even non-Jews who are pious (*Tosefta*, *Sanhedrin*, 13a). Good examples are a non-Jew official who saved the life of Raban Gamliel by sacrificing his own life (*Ta'anit*, 29b), and a roman executioner who saved Rabbi Hanina ben Teradyon from being burnt slowly at the stake and jumped together with him into the fire (*Avodah Zarah*, 18a).

Incidentally, the concept of Paradise and its merits is used metaphorically to denote the good things in life. The Talmud says that human beings in this world have been granted three things which are 'quasi' or a 'sort of' Paradise: Sabbath, the Sun and sex (*Berakhot*, 57b). (All the Hebrew words for these concepts contain the letter 'sh' at least once).

The following are 'saved from Hell', i.e. they too will go to Paradise:

- He who visits a sick man (*Sanhedrin*, 40a).
- He who gives donations to charity (*Gittin*, 7a).
- He who eats three meals on Sabbath (*Shabbat*, 118a).
- Those who do good deeds in general (*Yevamot*, 102b).
- Those who suffer in this world: the poor, the sick, and the one oppressed by the authority.

- Some add to this list those whose wives are wicked, indicating that they suffer in life as if they are already in Hell (*‘Eruvin*, 41a).<sup>4</sup>

### Who are the dwellers of Paradise?

We find in many places in post-biblical literature that several personalities, who were known for their good deeds during their lifetime, have reached Paradise after their death, e.g.: Abraham, Isaac Jacob, Reuben, Judah, Moses, Manasseh Job, the Ten Jewish martyrs, as well as all the righteous people. However, the rabbis realize that all men are fallible, and, consequently, if a man commits a sin he may think that he will never reach Paradise. Hence, they state that those whose record shows more ‘credits’ (*zekhuyyot*) will reach Paradise (*Sanhedrin*, 27b). Even Esau ‘the rascal’, Jacob’s brother, will cover himself with his shawl and will sit in Paradise with the righteous in the future (*Nedarim*, 38b).

### What and where is Hell ?

Hell or *Gehinnom* is a place of calamity and is often used as a deterrent or an incentive for reaching Paradise. Hence, it is clearly associated with punishment. The Greeks distinguished between *hades* the place reached by the spirits of the dead (the biblical Hebrew equivalent is *sheol*), and *tartaros* the place where sinners are severely punished. According to the Apocrypha (*Baruch*, II,4, 3-6), Hell looks like a monstrous serpent who swallows up the sinners, and its voice is similar to the voice of those who are being tortured there (*Enoch*, I, 22, 5). Moreover, it is so loud that it goes from one side of the world to its other side (*Avodah Zarah*, 17a).

Quoting the Essens’ sources, Josephus describes Hell as a cold and dark cave (*The Jewish Wars*, II, 8;11). Post-biblical Jewish sources postulate that the souls of the righteous go to Paradise. Hell is reserved for the sinners (*‘Eruvin*, 19a). Its mouth, which is found between two palm trees (*Sukkah*, 32a), is narrow, belching out eternal smoke (*Menahot*, 99b). Its dimensions are immeasurable (*Ta’anit*, 10a): it is sixty times bigger than Paradise, and, therefore, if it is compared with a pot, the whole world is its lid (*Pesahim*, 94b). Its borders are not marked. Hence, it is infinite, although the Garden of Eden is surrounded by *meusim* (fouls) and Hell is surrounded by *ta’anuqim* (pleasures) (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:755). However, the distance between Paradise and Hell is less than a handbreadth (*Pesiqta*, 2). Hell can talk (*Shabbat*, 104a), and can also scream. It, or the angels at its entrance, often beg God to direct all the sinners towards it

<sup>4</sup> See also *Yevamot* 63b where a wicked woman is compared to Hell.

(*Avod. Zar.*, 17a; *Eliyahu Zuta*, 20). Hell is situated underground, under the sea, in heaven or behind the mountains of darkness (*Tamid*, 32b). The high temperature of the spas of Tiberia is explained by the fact that they are built above Hell (*Shabbat*, 39a). The fire in Hell is so fierce that the setting sun ‘recharges’ itself with it. (*Bava Batra*, 84a).

Like Paradise (Eisenstein 1915:84), Hell has several gates<sup>5</sup>, and seven sections (*Sotah*, 10b). It has many rivers of fire and smoke, and it is covered with darkness, though some claim that it is lit (*Pesahim*, 54a; *‘Eruvin*, 19a). The light in Hell, which was created on Monday (*Pesahim*, 54a), cannot affect Jewish offenders of the Law and the students of the Law (*Hagigah*, 27a), although no explanation is given to the question as to what the latter are doing there in the first place, when all students of the Law have been promised to be in Paradise after their death (e.g. *Hagigah*, 12b, 14a).

There are several Angels in Hell among whom are: Nagrisel or Arsiel or Samael or Qippod, then Qushiel, Shaftiel, Matniel, Avniel, Hadarniel and Rogziel. As expected, all these names except Qippod end with the word *el* referring to God. Nagrisel stops the righteous to pray to God to spare the sinners, Arsiel gives the sinners to drink poison and Qushiel flogs them with a whip of fire (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:755-756).

The two *Talmuds* and the *Midrashs* discuss extensively the sins for which those who have committed them are punished in Hell. To avoid the ordeal, we find in various places in these sources long discussions or short dicta stating what one should do or should not do in order “to be saved from the domain of Hell”.

### Who reaches Hell?

Inevitably the wicked and the arrant sinners, whether Jews or non-Jews (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 17a; *Bava Metsia*, 82b), since even when they stand at the gates of Hell they refuse to repent (*‘Eruvin*, 19a). Hence, they are doomed to be in Hell for ever (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 17a). Also pagans will walk over the Bridge of Hell and will fall into it (*Pesiqta Rabbah*, 35-37). The School of Shammai asserts that only arrant sinners stay in Hell for ever, the petty offenders go down to Hell to ‘purify’ themselves and then they go up to Heaven. The School of Hillel, however, claims that the petty offenders do not go down to Hell at all. More serious rascals and criminals go to Hell for a year, and only those who deny resurrection or those who cause other people to sin remain in Hell for some generations. (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 16-17; *Shabbat*, 31b). To these the *Talmud* adds

---

<sup>5</sup> Some claim that it only has three: one in the desert, one in the sea and one in Jerusalem (*‘Eruvin*, 19a).

other cases of those who will descend to Hell and will never ascend back: the adulterer, the one who insults another person in the presence of other people, the one who defames his friend (*Bava Metsia*, 51a) and the one who causes trouble between a married couple (Eisenstein 1915:92).

The following are those who will reach Hell:

- He who has sex with a married woman (*Sotah*, 4b).
- He who ‘walks behind a woman when crossing a river’ (*Shabbat*, 61a; *‘Eruvin*, 18b).
- He who tells gossip about a pious person who has died (*Berakhot*, 19a).
- He who is a sycophant (*Sotah*, 41b).
- He who is uncouth (*Avodah Zarah*, 78b).
- He who is arrogant (*Bava Batra*, 10b; *Avodah Zarah*, 18b).
- He who offends his friend (*Bava Metsia*, 59a; *Sanhedrin* 107a).
- He who refrains from studying the Torah<sup>6</sup> (*Avodah Zarah*, 71a).
- He who teaches a dishonest student (*Hullin*, 133a).
- He who uses obscene language (*Shabbat*, 33a).
- He who is jealous of the students of the Law, upon reaching Hell his eyes will be filled with smoke (*Bava Batra*, 75a).
- He who recites the prayer “Hearken O’ Israel” carefully, if commits a sin he will find that Hell has been cooled for him (*Berakhot*, 15b).
- He who follows the advice of his wife goes to Hell (*Bava Metsia*, 59a).
- He who banter or chaffs (*Yerushalmi*, *Berakhot*, 82, 5-8).
- He who pays money to a woman in order to look at her (*‘Eruvin*, 18b).

### Who dwells in Hell?

The wicked and rascals will end up in Hell (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 16b). The *Talmuds* and the *Midrashim* provide several examples, such as: Some biblical personalities e.g. Bil’am and his disciples, King Ahab, Abshalom, Jerobo’am the son of Nebat and his friends (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 17a)<sup>7</sup>. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babel, the people who perished in the Flood, the people of the city of Sodom, Qorah and his comrades, the Israelites who were not allowed into Canaan [except Moses (*Temurah*, 16a)], the ten tribes (*Sanhedrin*, 110b) and the wealthy people in Babel (*Beitsah*, 32b).

<sup>6</sup> Literally, the one who separates himself from the company of the students of the Law.

<sup>7</sup> Since God offered to him to repent and he refused (*Sanhedrin*, 102a).

### What can the sinners and the righteous expect in the world to come?

The dwellers of Hell can only expect torture and suffering, especially that the wicked will be punished by God pressing him from above and the chief of Hell from below ('*Arakhin*, 15b), or by the Angels of Hell. The various sanctions include being hung by the 'sinning' limbs, roasted in fire, usually fire which comes from inside the sinner, choked with smoke or eaten by worms, eating sand. (Eisenstein 1915:91-92; *Yalkut Shim'oni*, *Bereshit*, 20). Sometimes the sinner is struck by blizzards of snow or ice, and sometimes he is tortured by both (*Yerushalmi*, *Sanhedrin*, 81b). The wicked is also hit by a strong east wind (*Beshallah*, 2,4), is flogged by a whip of fire and is forced to drink poison (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:755).

The righteous, however, will enjoy the following privileges in Paradise: God will make the righteous sit in a circle while He will be sitting among them (*Ta'anit*, 31a). He will also erect a tabernacle for them made of the skin of the leviathan (*Bava Batra*, 74a), and they will enjoy food prepared from the flesh of the female leviathan (*Ibid*), and the flesh of the wild ox (*Bava Batra*, 75a) and the best of wines (*Berakhot* 34b). Thirty barrels will be filled with wine made of one grape (*Ketubbot*, 111a). Incidentally, the body of the leviathan diffuses bad smell, and had it not been for the fact that his head is in Paradise, no other creature would have been able to bear his smell (*Bava Batra*, 75a). According to *Midrash Jonah* the Prophet Jonah had told the leviathan who wanted to swallow the big fish inside whom he had found a shelter, what was going to happen to him in Paradise and the leviathan fled with fear "to a distance of two days" (*Tanhuma*, *Leviticus*, 8, 5).

What we may learn from the 'menu' which will be served in Paradise is that since the flesh of the leviathan is non-kosher, and the wild ox is not clearly identified<sup>8</sup>, it implies that no dietary restrictions i.e. kosher food will apply in Paradise, although in another place in these sources we are told that there will be no food, drink or sex in the world to come (*Berakhot*, 17a). Presumably, these earthly needs are not needed over there.

Finally, the following personalities, who reached Paradise after their death, were shown the world to come during their life time: Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel and a few rabbis of the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. Some of them were even shown Hell.

---

<sup>8</sup> In another text it is called *behemot* (*Pesiqta Rabba*, 16).

### Medieval Jewish sources

Medieval and later Jewish literature also deals with questions concerning the world to come without reaching unanimous views about it. Maimonides, one of whose Thirteen Principles speaks of resurrection, gives the impression that he is sceptical about the existence of Paradise and Hell. He quotes various views in favour of their existence without mentioning names, but avoids any firm statement in support of any view (*Commentary, Sanhedrin*, 10a, pp. 195-209). In another work he takes a more rational view of the world to come where he claims that Hell only means the deprivation of immortality with which the righteous is promised (*Hilkhot Teshuvah*, 8, 1.5).

The Kabbalah advocates the existence of two realms which are equivalent to Paradise (the upper realm) and to Hell (the lower realm). The soul goes through the lower section, which includes expiation by fire and ice, mainly for the purpose of purification, and then it goes up to Paradise, as the person has now been clean of sins. However, the souls of those who have committed very serious crimes, such as murder and idolatry will remain in Hell for ever. This idea was challenged by some Cabbalists who have regarded it as a contradiction to the concept of repentance and the idea of a forgiving God (Waite 1976:324-332). Some of them believe that each of the realms, i.e. Paradise and Hell, had two sections, upper and lower, and the final place for the soul was decided according to the person's behaviour during his life (*EH* 651). This explains why the process takes twelve months before the final destination has been reached (Cf. *Rosh ha-Shanah*, 17a).

In this context, medieval Jewish philosophy at large concentrates on questions such as life after death, good and evil, reward and retribution, rather than dealing with how Paradise and Hell look like. In general, Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages hold the view that Hell purifies the soul from the sins committed in this world in preparation for its move to Paradise.

### And what about Islam?

Since some of the papers which have been read in this colloquium have extensively dealt with the Muslim attitudes towards Paradise and Hell, I will confine my own discussion to some aspects of the subject which both faiths have in common.

Similarly to late Jewish sources, as has been discussed above, the Qur'ān and other Muslim religious literature emphasize the existence of Paradise and

Hell. Paradise is called in the Qurʾān *al-ġanna* (the Garden) (66 times), *ġannāt ʿAdn*<sup>9</sup> (the Gardens of Eden) (69), *an-naʿīm* or *ġannat/ġannāt an-naʿīm* (the pleasant or the Garden(s) of pleasant) (16), *malakūt as-samāwāt* (the Kingdom of Heavens)<sup>10</sup> (2); *firdaws* (garden)<sup>11</sup> (2) and *ʿilliyūn* (high places) (1). Other names which are metaphorical are also used.

Hell is referred to as *ġahannam*<sup>12</sup> (77), *ġaḥīm* [fire] (16), *an-nār* (the fire) (145), *saqar* [burning, light] (4), *laẓā* [blazing fire] (1), *al-hāwiya* (abyss) (1) (the root exists in biblical Hebrew in the sense of ‘disaster’), and *dār al-bawār* (house of perdition) (1). Later sources include other metaphorical names for both places.

The Qurʾān, the Ḥadīth and other theological and philosophical works speak at length about the two places, emphasizing clearly and vividly the contrast between them, and highlighting their role as places of reward and punishment. Similarly to Judaism, Islam too recognises seven spheres in each place<sup>13</sup>, each of which has a separate name. The Qurʾān, however, uses the seven names as synonyms, and only Muslim commentators sometimes distinguish between the different divisions, in reference to the type of fire and its ‘victims’. Thus, *ġahannam* is the place into which Muslim sinners will be consigned, *laẓā* is for Christians, *ḥuṭama* is for the Jews, etc. (Hughes 1935c). Moreover, the ‘Jewish’ Hell and the ‘Muslim’ Hell seem to be compatible: They both emphasize the severe punishment inflicted upon the sinners, which is usually carried out by glowing fire. Paradise in both faiths promise the righteous pleasures of the body and the soul. The only difference is that Muslim ‘menu’ includes ordinary ingredients, whereas the Jewish one talks about extraordinary food, consisting mainly of non-kosher products. Hence, although none of the two religions mentions the consumption of pork in Paradise, Jews will, as we have seen, be allowed to eat non-kosher flesh in Paradise whereas Muslims will be allowed to drink wine. Thus we are told by the Qurʾān that Paradise has rivers of water, milk, wine and pure honey, delicious fruit (Q 47.15) and poultry [The Jewish Paradise has rivers of milk, wine, honey and persimmon (Eisenstein 1915:84)]. The righteous will be sitting on couches covered with precious materials and jewellery. They will be served by young males and females (*ḥūr al-ʿayn*), more precisely, beautiful virgins with big eyes (Q 56, 14-24). The *houris*, by the way,

<sup>9</sup> The equivalent to *Gan ʿEden* in Hebrew.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew *malkhut ha-shamayim*; Aramaic *malkhuta di-shmaya*.

<sup>11</sup> *Pardes* in Hebrew is an orchard, both the Arabic and the Hebrew come from Persian, which is the etymology of the word ‘Paradise’.

<sup>12</sup> From Hebrew *gei Hinnom*.

<sup>13</sup> Although some sources refer to eight sections in Paradise and only seven in Hell, since the number of the righteous will exceed the number of sinners.

are only referred to in Sūras which came down in Mecca. Those which came down in Medina usually speak about the place in Paradise for the female-believers or the wives of the male-believers. This is another point Judaism and Islam have in common, that is to say, both do not discriminate between the men and women, as both sexes will reach either Paradise or Hell (Q 9,72). On the other hand, there are many Ḥadīṡs which postulate that “women are the chief population of Hell” (Wensinck 1971:96).

The question as to whether the righteous arrive in Paradise and the sinners go to Hell immediately after their death is discussed at length by Muslim theologians. Many of them believe that the sinner receives his punishment first in his grave, whereas both arrive at their final destinations after the Day of Judgement (Hughes 1935b). This certainly echoes the motive of *hibbut ha-qever* (beating in the grave) in Judaism, which appears in the *Aggadah* and in the Kabbalah and which refers to the punishment inflicted upon the sinner while in his grave. The Angel of Death carries out the action with a fiery chain. Those exempted are those who died in Erets Israel, those who are buried on Friday before sunset, those who give money to charity, those who recite their prayers devotedly and tell the Angel their Hebrew name for which they use a biblical verse in which the first and last letters correspond to their name<sup>14</sup>.

The idea of assisting the poor is also stressed in Islam as one of the ways which will help the Muslim to reach Paradise (Q 2/214-215). Similarly to Judaism, Islam also distinguishes between serious crimes (*kabā'ir*) and ‘mild’ offences (*ṣaġā'ir*). However, there is no unanimous agreement between Muslim theologians about the exact differences. Nevertheless, Allah, solely, as the Almighty, can forgive the sinner, and like Jewish theologians, Muslim theologians too claim that punishment in Hell is temporary. Another point is that the Prophet Muhammad and other prophets before him will act as intercessor (*ṣafīr*) speaking in favour of Muslim sinners in order to save them from Hell (Hughes 1935d) as Abraham and Moses will plead for the Jews.

On the other hand, the *Talmud* tells us that the righteous in Paradise asked Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses to recite a benediction in praise of God after a feast and they all refused, because they believed that their record was not clean of misconduct, only King David agreed (*Pesahim* 119b). The Ḥadīṡ, on the other hand, tells us that the believers will gather on the Day of Resurrection and will ask Adam, Noah, Abraham Moses and Christ to intercede for them with God, and they will all reject the request because of various sins they had committed. Only the Prophet Muhammad will accept the task (*Hadith Qudsi*, 131-135).

<sup>14</sup> *JE* II, 464 “Hibbut ha-Kever”. See also Hughes 1935b.

The Resurrection will take place on the Day of Judgement when Allah will decide the fate of all creatures, after they were tried briefly by the Angels Munkir and Nakīr. Unlike Judaism which speaks generally about the Day of Judgement, Islam provides details of the procedures. Various *sūras* mention blowing horns, all people die, except a few, many people turning into animals or will have bodily defects. Only the righteous will come back to life unharmed. The Day will be very hot, the Books will be opened and the Scales will be used. People will walk over a very narrow Bridge called *ṣirāṭ*. The wicked will fall in Hell and the righteous will pass to Paradise. The idea of the Bridge is found in Judaism too (*Shabbat*, 32a). Similar to Moses' visit to Paradise, we are told by the Ḥadīth about Muḥammad's visit of the place on his way to Heaven (Gardet 1960ff).

Another common factor between the Jewish and the Muslim Hell is the belief that Hell is not content with the number of sinners it admits. Hence, in a dialogue with God it "asks for an addition" (Q 50,30).

Finally, while both religions refer to physical pleasures as a reward to the righteous, both emphasize the fact that the greatest pleasure is achieved by the righteous in Paradise in their being close to God.

## Conclusions

Both Judaism and Islam strongly stress the existence of Paradise as the place of reward for the righteous and Hell as the place of retribution for the wicked. Furthermore, while both faiths leave the choice in the hand of the individual, while in the present world, the message is unequivocal: Do good and go to Paradise, commit sins and reach Hell.

Moreover, since Islam was heralded in the seventh century, when the concepts of Paradise and Hell and the whole ethos behind them had already been well-established in both Judaism and Christianity, it is not surprising that Islam has followed suit in introducing its followers to the intricacies of the world to come.

## REFERENCES

A. Primary sources<sup>15</sup>

*Aggadah* = *Sefer ha-Aggadah: mivhar ha-agadot she-ba-Talmud uva-Midrashim*. Edited by Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitski. Tel-Aviv: Devir, 1953.

*Bible* = *The New English Bible*, Oxford - Cambridge, 1970.

al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* = Abū °Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*. Edited by Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Baġā. Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987.

*Hadith Qudsi* = *Forty Hadith Qudsi*. Selected and translated by Ezzedin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies. Beirut: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1982.

Josephus, *The Jewish War* = Josephus Flavius, *The Jewish War* (= *The Loeb classical library*, 203, 210, 487). Translated by H. St. John Thackeray. 3 vols., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Maimonides, *Commentary* = *Mishnah °im perush Rabenu Mosheh ben Maimon: maqor ve-targum*. Translated from the Arabic and edited by Yosef Qafah. 6 vols., Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Quq, 723-729 [1963-1968].

Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah*. Ma'unt Qisqo : ha-Yeshivah mi-Naitra, 712 [1951/2].

*Qur'ān* = *The Holy Qur'ān*. Text, translation and commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Lahore, Ashraf, 1975.

## B. Secondary sources

Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer. 1908-1959. *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew*. 16 vols., Jerusalem & Berlin: Langenscheidt.

Eisenstein, Judah David. 1915. *Otsar Midrashim: bet 'eked le-matayim midrashim qetanim va-agadot u-ma'asiyot*. New York. [s.n.].

*EH* = *Encyclopaedia Hebraica* = *ha-Entsiqlopedyah ha-°Ivrit*. 32 vols., Jerusalem: Hevrah le-Hotsaat Entsiqlopedyot, 709-741 [1949-1981].

*EP* = *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd. ed. by H. A. R. Gibb et al. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960-2009.

*EJ* = *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971.

<sup>15</sup> Various editions of and commentaries on the *Mishnah*, *Talmud Bavli*, *Talmud Yerushalmi* and the *Midrashim* have been consulted.

- Gardet, L. 1960ff. "Djanna". *EP* II, 447-452.
- Hughes, Thomas Patrick. 1935a. *A Dictionary of Islam: being a cyclopaedia of the doctrines, rites, ceremonies, and customs, together with the technical and theological terms, of the Muhammadan religion*. London: Allen, 1935.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1935b. "Azābu'l-qabr". In: Hughes 1935a: 27-28.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1935c. "Hell". In: Hughes 1935a: 170-173.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1935d. "Intercession". In: Hughes 1935a: 214-215.
- Jastrow, Marcus. 1950. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic literature, with an index of Scriptural quotations*. 2 vols., New York: Pardes Pub. House.
- JE* = *The Jewish Encyclopedia: a descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times to the present day*. Edited by Cyrus Adler *et al.* New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901-1906.
- Kasowski, Binyamin. 1965. *Otsar leshon ha-Tanaim: sefer ha-matimot (qonqordantsya) le-Mekhilta de-Rabi Yishmael*. Jerusalem: Bet ha-Midrash le-Rabanim ba-Ameriqa.
- Kasowski, Chayim Yehoshua. 1956-60. *Otsar leshon ha-Mishnah: sefer ha-matimot (qonqordantsya) le-shishah sidre Mishnah*. Jerusalem: Masadah.
- Kasowski, Chayim Yehoshua. 1954-82. *Otsar leshon ha-Talmud: sefer ha-matimot (qonqordantsya) le-Talmud Bavli*. 41. vols., Jerusalem: Misrad ha-Hinukh ve-ha-Tarbut shel Memshelet Yisrael.
- Kasowski, Moshe. 2004. *Otsar leshon Talmud Yerushalmi*. Jerusalem & New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
- Waite, Arthur Edward. [1976]. *The Holy Kabbala: a study of the secret tradition in Israel as unfolded by sons of the doctrine for the benefit and consolation of the elect dispersed through the lands and ages of the greater exile*. Secaucus, NJ.: Citadel Press.
- Wensinck, Arent Jan. 1971. *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.