

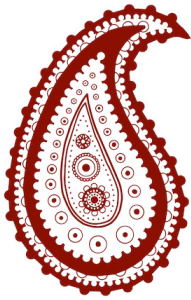
DĀNESH

THE OU UNDERGRADUATE
JOURNAL OF
IRANIAN STUDIES



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA
College of International Studies
Department of International and Area Studies

Volume 2 (2017)



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Volume 2 (2017)

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From the Faculty Advisor

This second volume of *DĀNESH* represents a significant expansion of the journal, both in terms of the scope of topics covered by the published articles, and by the growth of the journal's editorial team. Since its founding in 2016, *DĀNESH* has sought to provide a forum to showcase original research produced by Iranian Studies undergraduate students at the University of Oklahoma. This volume of the journal was produced through the able leadership of **Elizabeth "Libby" Ennenga** (BA, 2017), as the journal's editor-in-chief. Under Libby's editorial leadership *DĀNESH* has continued to thrive as a forum for the study of all aspects of the history, culture, society, and politics of Iran and the Persianate world.

This year also marks the maturing of OU's Iranian Studies program into the newly christened **Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies**. As the program has grown, so too has the interest and dedication of OU students in the field of Iranian Studies. The publication of *DĀNESH*, a peer-reviewed journal published under the auspices of OU's Farzaneh Center and the OU College of International Studies, is also dedicated to highlighting the growing undergraduate program in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

The name of the journal, *DĀNESH*, comes from the Persian word meaning *knowledge, learning, and wisdom*. We believe this is a fitting name for a journal that seeks to foster deep and compassionate understanding of one of the world's most culturally rich and historically complex civilizations. It is with this in mind that we present the second volume of *DĀNESH*.

Afshin Marashi

Farzaneh Family Chair in Modern Iranian History

Director, Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies

From the Editor-in-Chief

I am honored to have been a part of the creation of Volume Two of *DĀNESH*. After an exceptionally successful inaugural edition of the journal, I have been more than impressed to see the quality of this new edition. This journal is made up of outstanding research examining the rich history, numerous religions, complex political climate, and vibrant culture of Iran. I believe in the transformative power of knowledge, and each article published in *DĀNESH* proves the academic dialogue on Iranian Studies is thriving at the University of Oklahoma.

Many students worked diligently to create the second edition of the journal. I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the associate editors who were consistently a positive hardworking team throughout this process. I would also like to recognize the authors of Volume Two; whose distinguished works are the reason the journal is possible. Each author remained professional, involved, and patient throughout the entire process — and for that I thank you. To the University of Oklahoma Libraries and Printing Services, thank you for your necessary assistance to help make *DĀNESH* accessible to readers both digitally and in physical copies.

The quality of work and endless support given to this journal is a direct reflection of the growth of the Iranian Studies Program at the University of Oklahoma. Thank you to the Farzaneh family for their generous donations that have allowed students to continue to pursue their interests in Iranian Studies. Most of all, my sincerest gratitude goes to Dr. Afshin Marashi. Neither this journal, nor the Iranian Studies Program would be possible without your continued support of the students and their work. Your guidance, assistance, and support have made all the difference.

Libby Ennenga (BA 2017)
Editor-in-Chief

Angels, Demons, and Saviors: Tracing the Influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism and Christianity

Armeen Namjou

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Founded in the sixth century BC by the Iranian prophet Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism became the primary religion of pre-Islamic Iran, and is still practiced today mainly in parts of India. The social and religious impact that Zoroastrianism had on neighboring empires cannot be overstated as it is often considered the first attempt of any major religion at monotheism. However, Zoroastrianism was not exclusively monotheistic, incorporating what would be a very influential dualistic view of the world. Although it can be said that Zoroastrianism as a religion died centuries ago, its influence still persists today. As Mary Boyce notes: “So it was out of Judaism enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism that Christianity arose in the Parthian period, a new religion with roots thus in two ancient faiths, one Semitic, the other Iranian.”¹

Before we can continue, it is important to define what I mean by influence. As stated best by James Barr, it is one thing to see similarities between Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Judaism, it is an entirely different thing to argue that “the structures and internal dynamics” of these three religions are similar.² All three religions might share some kind of doctrine concerning angels and demons, for example, but how they define that doctrine, how much value they place on it, and how it fits into the religion are all vastly different. Additionally, I am not making the argument that many doctrines in Judaism and Christianity exist solely

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¹ Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979) 99.

² James Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence: The Case of Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 2 (1985): 220.

because of external influences like Zoroastrianism, an argument, as Barr notes, that many scholars do make.³ What I am attempting is to examine elements from Zoroastrianism that resemble elements in Christianity and Judaism and provide evidence for these similarities — I am not evaluating how influential these elements were (if at all). Instead, I am finding correlations, not evaluating the legitimacy of them. With our modified definition of influence established, there are two key ways in which Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism and Christianity. Keeping in mind that any influence that Zoroastrianism had was influenced by the historical interactions between the three religions, by tracing the concept of a messiah or savior and the doctrine of angelology and demonology in Zoroastrian texts and comparing that to Christian and Judaic texts, the influence of Zoroastrianism emerges.

Ideas and Conceptions of Saviors in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity

The concept of a messiah is an old one, and the term itself is Judaic. When Cyrus the Great allowed Jews to return from Babylon, he is later referenced in Jewish texts as a messiah — this is one of many instances of a mingling of Iranian and Jewish cultures. But the idea of a leader of a cause who is special in some way, could be argued, dates back before Zoroaster. Regardless, it is reasonable to make a case for the similarities in the histories of important figures in Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity. John R. Hinnells makes a compelling case for the influence of savior imagery in Zoroastrianism and its impact on Judaic and Christian imagery of saviors.⁴ It is generally accepted, and will be discussed later, that the idea of the devil or Satan in the Jewish and Christian sense could have developed in part from Zoroastrian conceptions. Hinnells argues that when the development of Satan reaches the point where it becomes truly demonic and antagonistic, then the saviors of these religions are thus given the task to stop him.⁵ The savior must now defeat a supernatural being, and this conception demands new imagery. Thus if the devil imagery stemmed from Zoroastrianism, then it follows that a source for savior imagery could

³ Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence,” 204.

⁴ John. R. Hinnells, “Zoroastrian Savior Imagery and Its influence on the New Testament”, *Numen* 16, No. 3 (1969): 162.

⁵ Hinnells, “Zoroastrian Savior Imagery,” 162.

also stem from the religion.⁶ Upon closer examination some similarities emerge.

Patricia Crone notes that Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians all seemed to view savior-like figures rather similarly as “bearers of glory/spirit.”⁷ So it seems that sacred figures in all three religions contained something inside them that elevated them beyond man. Generally, when one thinks of Zoroastrianism, an immediate contender for a savior-like figure would be Zoroaster himself. As with many important prophetic figures in Christianity and Judaism, Zoroaster believed that his words were the words of God — that God had appointed him to send his message to the masses.⁸ Lloyd Applegate also notes that Zoroaster is arguably the first of the many prophets of the great religions to “espouse the doctrine of immortal life.”⁹ Additionally, as Mary Settegast notes, Zoroaster believed that at the end of time one of his sons, Saoshyant which roughly translates to savior, would lead “humanity in the final battle against evil, after which each individual will be judged by the goodness of his thoughts, words, and deeds.”¹⁰ Settegast points out that certain aspects of Zoroastrian eschatology—including the idea of an apocalyptic savior—is similarly found in Judaism and Christianity.¹¹ Zoroaster believed that human beings had an individual immortal soul that would be judged in the afterlife and subsequently be rewarded or punished for how they lived their mortal life.¹² In a general sense, this is very similar to what Jesus taught. To add to the parallels between Jesus and Zoroaster, Applegate also wonders if there is any connection between the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth and some doctrines of Zoroastrianism that cite a “virgin conception” of Zoroaster.¹³ Jansheed K. Choksy, notes that Zoroaster’s struggle to garner followers is a common motif in all the major religions—the rejection of a prophet by his

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 335.

⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁹ Lloyd R. Applegate, “Zoroastrianism and Its Probable Influence on Judaism and Christianity,” *The Journal of Religion and Psychological Research* 23, no. 4 (2000): 190.

¹⁰ Mary Settegast, *When Zarathustra Spoke* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers Inc, 2005), 61.

¹¹ Settegast, *When Zarathustra Spoke*, 61.

¹² Ibid., 191.

¹³ Ibid., 193

own people and often having to relocate.¹⁴ This motif is found “from Abraham at Ur, to Jesus at Nazareth, and on to Muhammad at Mecca.”¹⁵ Furthermore, the violent nature of Zoroaster’s murder is also reflected in Jesus’ crucifixion.¹⁶ Zoroaster’s ethical teachings are similar to prophetic figures of Judaism and Christianity: he taught that man has free will and that his good and bad deeds will be “weighed on a balance at the final judgment.”¹⁷

Jenny Rose mention a story about Zoroaster that is extraordinarily similar to a story in the Book of Daniel.¹⁸ The story begins with him asking Ahura Mazda for immortality upon which Ahura Mazda shows him “the wisdom of all knowledge.”¹⁹ Zoroaster then sees a vision of “the cosmos as a tree with four branches, of gold, silver, steel and mixed iron”—these four metals were meant to represent the four successive Iranian epochs from the beginning to the end of time.²⁰ The association of four epochs with types of metals is extremely similar to the division of kingdoms in “Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.”²¹ Similarities with Daniel continue with scholars drawing similarities between his end-of-times dream of four beasts with the final beast being compared to Azi Dahaka, which is a dragon of ancient Iranian myth.²²

The influence of Zoroaster as an individual still persists today. Not only did the Greeks wish to know more about him and his relationship with their own philosophers, but as Rose points out, there was a trend to incorporate Zoroastrian thought back into European culture in the 15th and 16th centuries.²³ What culminated was his picture in the Vatican among mathematicians and astrologers like Ptolemy.²⁴ Just like with the great messianic figures of Judaism and Christianity, Zoroaster’s presences is still

¹⁴ Jamsheed K. Choksy, “Hagiography and Monotheism in History: Doctrinal encounters between Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, No. 4 (2003): 409.

¹⁵ Choksy, Hagiography and Monotheism in History, 410.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 240

¹⁸ Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 92.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

²² *Ibid.*, 92.

²³ *Ibid.*, 240.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 240.

felt today. Though he preached the word of God — albeit the concept of God itself greatly differed between the three religions — the question of whether Zoroaster should be considered a savior figure or not is a legitimate question. But if not Zoroaster then who? One possible answer that one could look at is Zoroaster’s aforementioned sons, Saoshyant.

The name Saoshyant is mentioned in the Gathas, which are a collection of seventeen hymns created by Zoroaster himself and is a central and sacred text in Zoroastrianism. Although some scholars believe he was referring to himself, John R. Hinnells argues that the name is used in several sections in the Gathas in the singular and based on the context of the passage it can be “concluded that Zoroaster was indeed referencing a future savior.”²⁵ Jenny Rose remarks how similar Saoshyant is to “the one like the son of man” in the book of Daniel.²⁶ Furthermore, the term “son of man” would come to represent one who is righteous and who would create a new world order — a similar characterization to Saoshyant.²⁷

The conception of Saoshyant, like the birth of Zoroaster and Jesus entails that he will be virgin born. As the legend goes, in a lake where Zoroaster’s seed is preserved and watched over by the *fravashis* (guardian angels), three virgins bathing there will become impregnated — giving Zoroaster three sons by three virgins.²⁸ When the end of the world draws near, Saoshyant will serve several purposes. Like many other prophets of the great religions, Saoshyant will preside an eschatological judgment.

First, Saoshyant will “restore the world” or, to put in another way, he will drive out the evil in the world. As Hinnells points out in one ancient Avestan text (an ancient Iranian language and the language of Zoroastrian scripture) Saoshyant is referred to as “fiend smiter.”²⁹ Rose argues that a divine being fighting and slaying a beastly manifestation of evil is an essential part of Zoroastrian eschatology, not only appears in the book of Daniel but also predates it.³⁰ This idea of the trials and tribulations of the end of times and the destruction of the world as we know it also appears in the “Jewish apocalyptic pseudepigraphon (falsely-attributed writings) the

²⁵ Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 165.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁹ Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 167.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

Oracle of Hystaspes.”³¹ Rose speculates that this apocalypse-like tale could have emerged from Iranianized Judaism in the Parthian era.³² After driving out the evil of the world — in this case characterized by demons — Saoshyan will incite a great resurrection of all the dead, which fittingly will destroy one of the devils greatest weapons — death.³³ Just as Zoroastrianism’s Saoshyan will defeat the world’s demons, as referenced in the New Testament, so does Jesus.³⁴ In line with the New Testament tradition, in Zoroastrianism there is the idea that there will be a physical resurrection of man and that it is the savior who will raise the dead.³⁵ Upon resurrection, a great “final judgment” will take place where either God or Jesus — Hinnells points out that there is confusion over who the judge will be—will evaluate all of mankind’s sins.³⁶ In this judgment, one will either be cast down to a type of hell or “paradeisos” which Rose points out is connected with eschatological doctrines in Jewish and Christian contexts.³⁷ By the latter half of the third century BC, the concept of “paradeisos” permeated into the culture of the Jews of Alexandria and was used to refer to a garden, a vineyard, or a fruit orchard.³⁸ The term also found its way into the New Testament where it “assumes the sense” of humanity’s renewal of the Garden of Eden (Rose 88).³⁹ Interestingly, the Garden of Eden is often considered an earthly paradise and the idea of an earthly paradise is also found in Zoroastrianism. C.N. Seddon also notes that the concept of resurrection of the body found in the Old Testament was most likely influenced by Zoroastrian sources.⁴⁰

Additionally, Zoroastrian eschatology tradition teaches of an immortal soul and the rewards and punishments of it in the afterlife which, as J.H. Moulton cites, is established in the Gathas and is thus a concept almost as

³¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 168.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁵ Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 176.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 178.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ C.N. Seddon, “Zoroastrianism and its Influence,” *Modern Churchman* 31 (1942): 513.

old as Zoroaster himself.⁴¹ In Zoroastrianism, when the final judgment occurs, all men and women will receive a “personal conscious existence of happiness or misery.”⁴² Like in the Judaic and Christian sense, the righteous will be rewarded and the sinners will be punished after life and for all eternity. Finally, Saoshyan’s ultimate goal, according to Hinnells, is to “restore man to his primeval state.”⁴³ One of the primary reasons man sins is because they must eat and drink, which accordingly makes them susceptible to the demon Az or “greed.”⁴⁴ A return to this primeval state will destroy their dependency on food and drink and eliminate the susceptibility to sin.⁴⁵ This idea of transcendence above a human existence is found in Judaism and Christianity as well.

Although the images saviors are all extremely similar, it is important to note where the historical foundations for these similar evocation’s of a savior could have possibly stemmed from. Hinnells points to the Parthian invasion of Jerusalem around 40 BC.⁴⁶ Around this time, the Jews in Jerusalem were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the Roman Empire and, as a result, welcomed a Parthian invasion — most likely hoping for a freedom similar to that given by Cyrus the Great centuries before.⁴⁷ As a result of all the warfare around them, it is possible that around this time “apocalyptic speculation flourished” to explain these occurrences.⁴⁸ Thus, it is in this historical context that the common savior imagery in all three religions could have emerged: that of the savior defeating demons, bringing about a mass resurrection, and a judgment of the dead-turned-living.

The Similarities of the Doctrines of Angels and Demons in All Three Religions

Angelology and Demonology are doctrines that are similarly related in all three religions. In Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda is the one true God and

⁴¹ J. H. Moulton, “Zoroastrian influences on Judaism,” *The Expository Times* 9, No. 8 (1898): 357.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 357.

⁴³ J. H. Moulton, “Zoroastrian influences on Judaism,” 169.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

is the creator of all that is good in the cosmos.⁴⁹ Another “uncreated” entity is Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman as he is more informally called).⁵⁰ Angra Mainyu is an adversary of Ahura Mazda and is the great evil of the cosmos, with the two entities forever battling each other.⁵¹ Ahura Mazda then created six great creations often referred to as the “Amesha Spenta” or “Holy Immortals” to aid Ahura Mazda.⁵² These six divine beings are: “Vohu Manah” or “Good Purpose,” “Asha Vahishta” or “Best Righteousness,” “Spenta Aramiti” or “Holy Devotion,” Khshathra Vairya or “Desirable Dominion,” “Haurvatat” or “health,” and finally Ameretat or “Long Life.”⁵³ These divine beings were brought into the world to aid man in his constant struggle against evil.⁵⁴ In addition to the “Amesha Spenta”, there existed the “Fravarshis” which are the guardian angels of human beings.⁵⁵ Conversely, Angra Mainyu had his own legion of evil spirits dubbed “daevas”.⁵⁶ Angra Mainyu wanted his “daevas” to corrupt man through “evil word,” “evil thought,” and “evil deed.”⁵⁷ Similarly, in Judaism, Yahweh was viewed as the supreme entity and creator of the universe and attributes of love and goodness were often associated with him.⁵⁸ The same can be said for God in a Christian context. How the devil is characterized in the New Testament is also reminiscent of Angra Mainyu Seddon claims.⁵⁹ The New Testament devil is made out to be the enemy of God, one who attempts to seduce man —just as Angra Mainyu does.

Seddon also points to the idea that the conception of the “seven lamps of fire round the throne in the apocalypse” in the New Testament, could have sprung from the Amesha Spenta and another important angel in Zoroastrianism called *Sraosha* or obedience.⁶⁰ Seddon adds that in the book of Tobit in the Old Testament — composed around 200 BCE — the demon Asmodaeus is generally believed to be the Zoroastrian demon

⁴⁹ Boyce, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, 20.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁵ Applegate, “Zoroastrianism and Its Probable Influence on Judaism and Christianity,” 189.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 189

⁵⁷ Applegate, “Zoroastrianism,” 189.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 187-188

⁵⁹ Seddon, “Zoroastrianism and its Influence,” 515.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Aeshma Daeva who is the demon of wrath first seen in the Avesta.⁶¹ This is perhaps the most thoroughly cited influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism and Christianity, especially for the influence of Zoroastrians concept of angels and demons on Judaism and Christianity. The demon's name in the Jewish context probably derives from a middle Persian word—if not directly than indirectly.⁶² Additionally, though the demon of wrath was called Asmodaeus in the Jewish tradition this demon — as Werner Sundermann states — the demon was adapted into Christian mythology as well under the name of “Asmedai”.⁶³ Sundermann discusses how the Zoroastrian version of this demon was an enemy of the “meritorious consummation of the cohabitation of man and women,” because this would lead to further generations of human offspring who would support Ahura Mazda and oppose Angra Mainyu.⁶⁴ Sundermann goes on to conclude that the semantic similarities between the Jewish and Iranian terms for the demon and “the role they play as enemies of martial union” are possible explanations for why both terms refer to the same demon.⁶⁵ Since it is most likely the case that Asmodaeus was derived from the Zoroastrian version of the demon then the mention of a dog in the Tobit cannot be overlooked.⁶⁶ Prods Oktor Skjaervo explains the importance of dogs in the life of a Zoroastrian: Ahura Mazda created dogs to assist man in protecting his livestock and the homestead.⁶⁷ Additionally, killing a dog was considered a grave sin and would harm the chances of your soul entering paradise.⁶⁸ What most connects the Zoroastrian importance of dogs with the story in the Tobit is the fact that dogs were a key part of various cleansing rituals especially ones related to the dead.⁶⁹ Sundermann also notes that in the story in the Book of Tobit a dog played an important role in a funeral ceremony, thus relating directly to the Zoroastrian use of dogs.⁷⁰

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 514.

⁶³ Werner Sundermann, “Zoroastrian Motifs in Non-Zoroastrian Traditions,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18, No. 2 (2008): 156.

⁶⁴ Sundermann, “Zoroastrian Motifs in Non-Zoroastrian Traditions,” 159.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Prods Oktor Skjaervo, *The Oxford Handbook Of Iranian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 96.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 97.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 97.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 159.

J. H. Moulton cites similarities between angelology and demonology in Judaism and Zoroastrianism.⁷¹ He notes how the six Amesha Spenta are very similar to the Jewish hierarchy of angels: “Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Sandalfon, etc.”⁷² He compares how similar the battle between “Michael and his angels with the dragon and his angels” is with Vohu Manu’s conflict “with the corresponding evil powers, and especially by the thousand years struggle against Azi Dahaka, the Destructive Serpent.”⁷³ Moulton also observes the similarities in guardian angels in both religions and the fact that the angels in the latter part of the Old Testament “acquire a distinct and definite personality, with names and functions of their own”—as do the angels in Zoroastrianism.⁷⁴ Choksy finds parallels in Zoroaster’s revelation from Vohu Manu in Judaism and Christianity.⁷⁵ Specifically that Vohu Manu’s depiction as a righteous entity parallels the depictions of the angel Gabriel in Christianity and Judaism.⁷⁶ Jenny Rose adds on to these similarities by arguing that during the “deutero-canonical period,” these Judaic angels began to be seen dualistically as in Zoroastrianism.⁷⁷ With the angels either identified as being entities of “light and good” or angels of “darkness and evil.”⁷⁸ Rose also notes a development in the Jewish tradition that has elements of Zoroastrian influence. Specifically, that in the Jewish texts *Ascensio Isaiae* and *Jubilees*, Satan is personified as a “prince of demons” and is the head of a group of rebel angels.⁷⁹ Satan being personified in this way entails the idea of opposing forces fighting against one another for eternity—an unprecedented idea in the Jewish tradition until Jewish encounters with Zoroastrianism.⁸⁰ Zoroastrian angelology and demonology influences can also be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, specifically the *War Rule* and the “Community Rule” texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁸¹ The “Community Rule” describes tension between “the prince of light” and “the spirit of

⁷¹ Moulton, *Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism*, 352.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 356.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 356.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 356.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 409.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 409.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷⁹ Moulton, *Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism*, 89.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

darkness” named ‘Belial,’ and tensions between “the spirits of truth” and of “perversity and destruction.”⁸² These seemingly dualistic tensions between clashing deities obviously resemble motifs found in Zoroastrianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls did emerge around the time of the Avesta, which is the sacred text of the Zoroastrian religion.

Conclusion

The parallels between Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity are complicated, vast, and often questionable. Though it is evident that all three religions have interacted with each other, to what degree and to what extent did any exchange of religious ideas occur is still hotly contested. Even examining Zoroaster—the founder of the religion — as a savior of sorts is problematic. But in spite of all that the, similarities exist. How Zoroaster taught others to live their life and what happens after death are all extraordinarily similar to Judaic and Christian thoughts on these ideas. The idea of saviors as entities that will help conquer evil once and for all at the end of times is another common theme throughout all three religions.

From an empirical standpoint, Zoroastrianism’s greatest influence on Christianity and Judaism might be on angelology and demonology. Specifically the demon of wrath Aeshma Daeva, seems to be a direct influence on Judaism and to a lesser extent Christianity. The personification of angels in Zoroastrianism and the dualistic idea of divine good battling divine evil is another common thread found in all three religions. Finally — and perhaps most fittingly—the parallels between the eschatology of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity are significant. Simply put, they all have the same general idea of what happens after one dies and how the end of the cosmos looks—albeit with some select deviations of course. Moulton reasons that—from a sociological perspective—when the Jews realized that Zoroastrians had their own doctrine about the afterlife it was the “stimulus” they needed to interpret their own religion and understand what it told them about the afterlife.⁸³ So, it seems that Zoroastrianism led Judaic and Christian thinkers to reevaluate how they saw certain aspects of their own faiths and perhaps — even if it was subconsciously — paved the way for how Jews and Christians viewed the role of saviors and how they conceptualized what angels and demons were and what this function was in their faiths.

⁸² Ibid., 93.

⁸³ Moulton, *Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism*, 358.