COMPARATIVE HELL

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HELL

ARTS
OF ASIAN
UNDERWORLDS

Edited by Adriana Proser

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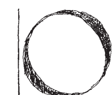

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Christiane Gruber

From Moral Catechism to Scathing Critique: *Picturing Hell in Islamic Artistic Traditions*

Chthonic themes are a hallmark of the world's major religions. In Asia and elsewhere, hell and its tortures often serve as an inverted mirror image of heaven and its pleasures. Both heaven and hell stress the apocalyptical consequences—positive and negative, respectively—of abiding by or transgressing certain moral, social, and religious codes of conduct. Within the Islamic faith, what lies in wait after the perishing of the human body likewise has catalyzed pious imagination about the afterlife. From the seventh century until the present day, Islamic textual and visual sources describe hell and its domains, demons, and denizens in dramatic detail; in addition, hell's contours often are inflected by contemporary concerns, from the vying for social control and political power to the claiming of religious ascendancy above other sects and religions.

Descriptions of hell permeate Islamic narrative sources stretching back to the Qur'an, in which a large number of verses warn of the infernal regions. Although Muslim authors refer to hell by a number of names that describe its blaze-like qualities, the whole of hell typically is called Jahannam in Arabic and other Islamic languages.[1] The Qur'an speaks of Jahannam as "brought forth" (89:23) as well as "boiling up" and "bursting with rage" (67:7–8) on the Day of Judgment, spirited expressions that prompted some writers to allegorize hell as a growling beast (fig. 1).[2] Most often, however, hell is said to be a deep abyss or multilevel pit overseen by a guardian demon named Malik (that is, "King" [of hell]) and populated by punisher angels, snakes, and scorpions that torment huddled and chained groups of sinners for having committed major sins, including murder and adultery. From hell's fiery soil also sprout thorny shrubs and a large infernal tree called Zaqqum, which bears demon-headed fruits that are forced upon hell's denizens as a form of putrid, scalding-hot food.[3] Hell thus serves as the antithesis of paradise, where the blessed reside in the company of beautiful angels, servants, and companions while refreshing themselves with the fruit and water of its lush orchards and flowing rivers.

These many details reveal an indebtedness to Christian and ancient Iranian rather than East Asian paradigms. In an Islamic register, however, the concepts of original sin and temporal purgatory, as well as Satan's overseeing of hell, are notably absent. Instead, Muslim scholars have focused their attention on hell's creation and duration, with consensus opinion stipulating that God created the eschatological realms before the creation of the world, and that such realms would continue to exist

Opposite: detail of cat. no. 21, p. 131

Fig. 1. A painting in a manuscript of the *Ahwal al-Qiyama* (Conditions of Resurrection). Ottoman lands, late 16th or early 17th century. Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. H. $8\frac{7}{16}$ x W. $5\frac{5}{16}$ in. (21.5 x 13.5 cm. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. oct. 1596, folio 28v. The beast of hell is brought forth as the Prophet Muhammad and the three rightly guided caliphs ('Umar, 'Uthman, and Abu Bakr) intercede on behalf of resurrected souls. See cat. no. 25

forever. Theologians openly state that the everlasting presence and reality of heaven and hell—and above all, their spectacular rewards and punishments—are intended to arouse both desire (*targhib*) and fear (*takhwif*) among followers of the Islamic faith.[4] These appeals to the human emotions of hope and anxiety can serve as powerful motivators in real life, thereby enabling the maintenance or subversion of a particular status quo.

Many Islamic texts contributed to the field of infernology over the centuries. Besides the Qur'an, the Sayings of the Prophet (Hadith) often include a chapter dedicated to paradise and hell. In addition, paradise and hell also appear in texts concerned with describing the signs of the hour (*isharat al-sa'a*) and conditions of resurrection (*ahwal al-qiyama*) on the Day of Judgment or "Reckoning" (*yawm al-hisab*).[5] Among such apocalypses can be counted the tale of the Prophet's ascension (*mi'raj*), at which time Muhammad (ca. 570–632) is said to have risen through the celestial spheres in order to meet and speak with God as well as visit heaven and hell. Islamic ascent narratives not only supported the createdness of hell before the Day of Judgment, they also functioned as logbooks that enumerated major sins and minor misdeeds (such as lying and backbiting) that warranted punishment. To these Hadith compendia, apocalypses, and ascension texts can be added other literary sources, including books of omens and cosmological works, some of which were augmented with paintings and diagrams.

Fig. 2. The infernal Zaqqum tree and the torture of the denizens of hell, from the *Mi'rajnama* ("Book of Ascension"). Herat, Afghanistan, ca. 1436. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper. H. $6\frac{1}{2}$ x W. $7\frac{5}{8}$ in. (16.6 x 19.4 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, suppl. turc 190, folio 53v

While depictions of hell may have been made prior to 1300, the earliest extant images appear in Islamic "Books of Ascension" (*Mi'rajnamas*) made in Persianate lands during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These illustrated manuscripts, which survive in both fragmentary and complete form, narrate and depict the tale of Muhammad's celestial ascent on the back of his human-headed flying steed (named al-Buraq) and accompanied by the angel Gabriel. Besides his encounters with angels, Judeo-Christian prophets, and God, Muhammad also visits heaven and hell. Some medieval "Books of Ascension" inform their readers that hell is located between the fifth and sixth heavens (or higher), and that demons with cats' eyes and fiery breath torment polytheists, Christians, and idol worshippers as well as Muslim sinners of all stripes.[6]

The tortures of Muslim sinners are depicted most lavishly in two *Mi'rajnama* manuscripts from the Timurid period (1370–1507) that were made in the cities of Herat and possibly Samarqand, located in modern-day Afghanistan, between 1430 and 1460.[7] Besides illustrating chastisements reserved for the falsely devout, slanderers, those who steal the wealth of orphans, and women who nag their husbands, these manuscripts also include a startling depiction of the aforementioned Zaqqum, the tree of hell with branches that turn to spears and fruit that takes the shape of fierce animal heads (fig. 2). In one such painting, beneath the Zaqqum tree a blue-skinned demon with flaming hair and eyes oversees the gruesome scene below. As the caption above specifies, the red-fleshed torturers slice the tongues of "those who do not act in

accordance with their knowledge and, who, disregarding good advice, do not eschew their bad actions."[8] Fettered and kneeling in a golden blaze that lights up the folio's pitch-dark background, these sinners must suffer through retributive punishment in accordance with the severity of their crimes.

Both of these fifteenth-century ascension manuscripts close with approximately seventeen paintings depicting the tortures of sinners in hell. With such images, these premodern illustrated bio-apocalypses contain the most detailed and extensive cycles of depictions of the infernal realms in the history of Islamic art. The fact that such chthonic images bring the manuscripts to a conclusion strongly suggests that ascent narratives served not only as a way to praise the Prophet's chief miracle and promote conversion to Islam but also to strengthen certain behaviors among members of a Muslim princely elite. The latter holds particularly true for the Timurid *Mi'rajnama* commissions, which focus strictly on sins committed by Muslims rather than those of non-Muslims. The pedagogical value of these illustrated manuscripts thus lies in their role as "moral catechisms" and pictorial caveats, warning both young and adult reader-viewers of eschatological retribution should a particular *modus vivendi*—as delineated by the religious norms and social conventions of the day—not be observed properly.[9]

Contemporary concerns become even more discernible within Islamic depictions of hell over the course of the sixteenth century. In 1501, Shi'i Islam was declared the official religion of Persia under the aegis of the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722), while fear of the Day of Judgment increased throughout the Muslim world as the approach of the year 1000 in the Islamic (*hijri*) calendar (i.e., 1591) came into closer sight. Within early modern Iran, sectarianism and apocalypticism intersected with the visual arts in a series of Persian illustrated "Augury Books" (*Falnama*s), in which paintings accompany textual descriptions of both good and bad omens.[10] These manuscripts depict a number of apocalyptical themes, including the gathering of souls on the Day of Judgment (fig. 3).[11] Emerging from a Persian sectarian and millenarian milieu, the mid-sixteenth-century painting illustrated in figure 3 shows, above, the Shi'i imams seated in paradise; in the middle ground, Imam 'Ali (601–661) standing with a facial veil and flaming halo as he intercedes on behalf of the deceased; and below, several groups of huddled souls. Among these groups, some are humiliated by their nudity; the heads of others have been transformed into wild beasts, itself a punitive form of disfiguration; one group of men appears with blackened faces, an outward sign of inner decay and, hence, damnation to hell; and still others appear upside-down and engulfed by the earth as they plummet into the infernal realms.[12] In addition to showing the looming results of a last reckoning, this omen painting of the Last Judgment visually argues for the salvation of the faith community via the intercession of Imam 'Ali, the figurehead of Shi'i Islam.

By the end of the sixteenth century, eschatological texts also were rendered in pictorial form within Ottoman realms. These richly detailed narratives describing the conditions of resurrection include a variety of painted scenes, such as those of the resurrection, Last Judgment, delights of heaven, and tortures of hell (figs. 4 and 5).[13] Based on earlier Arabic-language apocalyptical sources, these Ottoman Turkish texts

Fig. 3. Day of Judgment (detail), from the *Falnama* ("Book of Omens"). Iran, Tabriz, Safavid period (1501–1722), ca. 1555. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper. H. 23¹⁄₁₆ x W. 17³⁄₁₆ in. (58.5 x 43.7 cm). Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of Stuart Cary Welch, Jr., 1999.302. See cat. no. 5

Above left: Fig. 4. The tortures of hell (detail), in the *Siyer-I Nebi*—A Scene from Purgatory. Turkey, ca. 1550–1650. Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on polished paper. H. 5¾ x W. 3⅜ in. (14.6 x 8.6 cm). Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Lewis Tu 5. See cat. no. 23

Above right: Fig. 5. The tortures of hell (detail), in the *Siyer-I Nebi*—A Scene from Purgatory. Turkey, ca. 1550–1650. Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. H. 5¾ x W. 3¼ in. (14.6 x 8.3 cm). Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Lewis Tu 6. See cat. no. 24

inform their reader-viewers of the events that will occur after the Day of Judgment. Among such events are various cataclysmic phenomena—such as the stars tumbling to the ground and the conjunction of the moon and sun (*jami‘ al-qamar wa’l-shams*)—that herald the resurrection and gathering of souls (fig. 6).[14] Immediately after the Last Judgment, we are further informed, the Prophet Muhammad and other religious leaders will intercede on behalf of the Muslim community while hell, incarnated as a double-headed, flame-breathing, dragon-like beast, is brought forth on chains by legions of angels. In one painting of this event included in an Ottoman “Conditions of Resurrection” manuscript (see fig. 1), the Prophet Muhammad, his head abstracted into a flaming aureole, accompanies three haloed individuals as he intercedes for the deceased below. It is likely that the three haloed men represent the first three rightly guided caliphs, ‘Umar (584–644), ‘Uthman (579–656), and Abu Bakr (573–634). With the conspicuous absence of the fourth caliph, the aforementioned ‘Ali, this and other Ottoman illustrated apocalypses appear to take a pro-Sunni eschatological stance, itself an overt contraposition to coeval pro-Shi‘i visual and rhetorical strategies aiming to stake claims to truth, legitimacy, and, therefore, salvation. It thus becomes clear that hell—itself a damning of enemies in both faith and politics—could be leveraged within sectarian contestations over religious and political power in the greater Middle East during the early modern period.

Fig. 6. The conjunction of the moon and sun on the day of resurrection, from the *Ahwal al-Qiyama* (“Conditions of Resurrection”). Ottoman lands, late 16th or early 17th century. Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. H. 8⁷⁄₁₆ x W. 5⁵⁄₁₆ in. (21.5 x 13.5 cm). Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. oct. 1, folio 26v

While salvation anxiety abated after the passing of the *hijri* millennium, interest in eschatological themes, including the location and structure of hell, nevertheless continued to persist in Islamic cosmological writings after the seventeenth century. Later Ottoman eschatological texts, especially the Sufi scientific encyclopedia entitled “Book of Gnosis” (*Ma‘rifatnama*) written by Ibrahim Hakkı Erzurumlu (1703–1780) in 1756–57, were produced as illustrated manuscripts and printed books, especially during the nineteenth century.[15] Often such texts were amplified with a double-page diagram entitled “the shape [of the cosmos] according to Islam” (*hay’at al-islam*). This diagram typically displays, on the right page, the Ka‘ba (Islam’s most sacred site, at the center of the Holy Mosque in Mecca) as the center of the universe, accompanied by diagrammatic renditions of paradise and hell above and below; and, on the left page,

the locus of gathering, judgment, and resurrection, likewise framed by similar depictions of paradise and hell (fig. 7).[16]

In these cosmic pictograms, hell is shown in the lower third of each composition as a series of fuchsia-toned levels (*tabaqat*). These graduated steps are inscribed with the numbers one through seven, and thus must be understood as equivalent to the seven names of hell. In this case, then, the names of hell are understood as separate locales that proceed downward, much like steps, towards the valley and abyss or pit of hell, both of which are identified in the diagram. Additionally, hell is shown as a space located below a narrow bridge (*sirat*) from which individuals fall through gates (*abwab*) into the infernal regions, where they will be forced to eat toxic fruits from the Zaqqum tree and drink molten liquids from vessels.[17] The diagram's right folio also specifies

Fig. 7. Ibrahim Hakkı Erzurumlu (1703–1780, Ottoman lands). Double-page depiction of the cosmos, from the *Ma'rifatnama* ("Book of Gnosis"), 1235/1818. Ink and pigment on paper. H. 7¼ x W. 3⅜ in. (18.5 x 8.5 cm)

that the lowermost horizontal register, filled with a swath of gray pigment, represents hell's darkness (*zulma*) and veil (*hijab*). Put more simply, hell is schematized here as a gloomy netherworld cordoned off and sunken away from the salvific realms.

While these later Ottoman cosmic diagrams relay information via the graphic mode, figural representations of hell nonetheless endured into the modern period, above all within the religious arts of Qajar Iran (1794–1925). During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, images of hell appear in oil paintings on canvas (*parda*) used as visual props by popular storytellers as well as in architectural tiles and wall paintings, thereby expanding hell's visibility beyond the confines of the book and into the public domain. Large-scale cloth paintings were made for picture-based storytelling in Iran's streets and coffeehouses.[18] Some of these depict tales of the prophets and the epic deeds of Iran's heroes, while others present major politico-religious events such as the Battle of Karbala (680), at which time Imam Husayn (626–680) and his followers were murdered by the forces under Yazid (647–683).[19] This pivotal battle of early Islamic history—an event that precipitated long-lasting Sunni-Shi'i political and doctrinal divergences—was commemorated in Qajar Iran with street processions, theatrical reenactments, and oral storytelling (and today, the death of Imam Husayn remains central to the yearly mourning ceremonies of Iranian and other Shi'i communities around the globe).

Iranian storytellers who performed on the streets and in coffeehouses and theaters made use of paintings of the battle to impart certain lessons, including the promise of salvation in the afterlife for those who suffer from persecution—above all, members of the Shi'i community (figs. 8 and 9). For these reasons, in such painterly and architectural arts, the Battle of Karbala appears alongside depictions of heaven and hell. While paradise is shown as reserved for the Shi'i imams, the (decapitated and wounded)

Fig. 8. 'Abbas Al-Musavi (Iran). *The Battle of Karbala* (detail), Qajar period (1794–1925), late 19th–early 20th century. Oil on canvas. H. 68½ x W. 133 in. (174 x 337.8 cm). Brooklyn Museum, New York, Gift of K. Thomas Elghanayan in honor of Nourollah Elghanayan, 2002.6. See cat. no. 6

martyrs of Karbala, and members of the faith community, for its part hell is embodied as an enormous growling beast swallowing up Sunni adversaries and other Muslim sinners, both Sunni and Shi'i. In works from the first half of the twentieth century, this visual "triad" combining Karbala, paradise, and hell also may depict the gathering of souls and the weighing of deeds on the scales of justice, as well as the salvific intercession of both Muhammad and 'Ali, as can be seen in the architectural tiles (dated 1936) decorating the Iranian mausoleum complex (*imamzada*) of Ibrahim in Shiraz (fig. 9).[20] As they help to cultivate public piety within modern Shi'i Islamic performative and shrine visitation practices, these modern Shi'i Iranian pictorial depictions in the public sphere also take on clear eschatological dimensions, in which hell is reified through the metahistorical promises—and warnings—meant to be extrapolated from the Battle of Karbala.

Fig. 9. Architectural tiles depicting the Last Judgment and the Battle of Karbala (not shown), tomb complex (*imamzada*) of Ibrahim. Shiraz, Iran, 1355/1936. Glazed ceramic tile panel. H. 220½ x W. 110¼ in. (560 x 280 cm)

As is the case for the Battle of Karbala, war often is couched as a battle of apocalyptical proportions pitting good versus evil, saved versus damned. Such a binary view of the world (and afterworld) in contexts of conflict pervades many world cultures and religions; it is by no means restricted to Islamic eschatological imagination. Beyond picturing war as "hell on earth"—especially as it intersects with today's ongoing crises in Syria and the greater Middle East—artists who live in the region or practice their craft in the diaspora have been inspired by a range of premodern images that tackle eschatological themes.

Fig. 10. Chaza Charafeddine (born 1964, Lebanon). "What the Hell!" from *Divine Comedy* photomontage series, 2010

The cycle of paintings depicting hell in the Timurid *Mi'rajnama* (see fig. 2, for example) has proved to be an especially rich pictorial repertoire for artists, including Chaza Charafeddine (born 1964), whose *Divine Comedy* series of photomontage images redeploys the manuscript's paintings in order to address pressing social concerns. In one example, the Lebanese artist has digitally inserted an awed character peering from behind hell's golden flames (fig. 10). This individual, Charafeddine notes, is a male to female Algerian transsexual now named Randa, who fled her country for Lebanon in 2010 after receiving death threats. The artist further explains that this image is intended as a critical questioning of a woman's worth, blasphemy laws, and even God's will. As for the title of the piece, Charafeddine stresses that the exclamation "What the Hell!" is intended as a sartorial provocation, as if Randa is asking, "Is THIS what will happen to me after death?"[21]

In this latest contribution to hell imagery in Islamic traditions, the visual presentation of the infernal realms offers a scathing critique of contemporary gender-based forms of violence. This modern presentation also mines centuries-old painterly traditions that provided pictorial catechisms for moral behavior as well as schematic views of the conditions of resurrection, harrowing though they may be.

Notes

1. On the names of hell, see Thomas O'Shaughnessy, "The Seven Names for Hell in the Qur'an," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24, no. 3 (1961): 444–69; and Christian Lange, "Introducing Hell in Islamic Studies," in *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, ed. Christian Lange (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 13. According to O'Shaughnessy, Jahannam is a foreign loan word derived from the Ethiopic *gahannam*, which ultimately comes from the Hebrew *ge-hinnom*, meaning the valley of Hinnom, where, in former times, children were burned alive in honor of the Phoenician god Moloch; see O'Shaughnessy, "Seven Names for Hell," 49. At an etymological level, the Islamic conceptualization of hell thus is related more closely to Christian and Jewish paradigms than Hindu and Buddhist concepts.
2. Christian Lange, "Hell," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet et al., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23502 (accessed July 23, 2018). For a further general discussion of hell in Islam, see Christian Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Rosalind Gwynne, "Hell and Hellfire," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00083 (accessed July 23, 2018); Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson, eds., *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017); and Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).
3. On hell's thorny shrubs and the Zaqqum tree in the Qur'an, see 69:36, 88:6, 37:62–66, and 44:43–46.
4. James Robson, "Is the Moslem Hell Eternal?," *The Moslem World* 28, no. 4 (October 1938): 386–93; Binyami Abrahamov, "The Creation and Duration of Paradise and Hell in Islamic Theology," *Der Islam* 79 (January 2002): 90.
5. For a Hadith-based apocalypse, see, for example, Isma'il Abu'l-Fadl 'Umar Ibn Kathir, *The Signs Before the Day of Judgement*, 3rd ed. (London: Dar al-Taqwa Ltd., 1994). On the conditions of resurrection more broadly, see Roberto Tottoli, "Muslim Eschatological Literature and Western Studies," *Der Islam* 83, no. 2 (2008): 452–77; and Maurice Wolff, ed. and trans., *Muhammedanische Eschatologie (Kitab Ahwal al-Qiyama)* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1872).
6. Christiane Gruber, *The Ilkhanid Book of Ascension: A Persian-Sunni Devotional Tale* (London: I. B. Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), 53–56.
7. On the two Timurid illustrated "Books of Ascension," see Marie-Rose Séguy, *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet: Miraj Nameh, Bibliothèque nationale (Manuscrit supplément Turn 190)*, trans. Richard Pevear (New York: Braziller, 1977); Christiane Gruber, *The Timurid Book of Ascension (Mi'rajnama): A Study of Text and Image in a Pan-Asian Context* (Valencia: Patrimonio Ediciones, 2008); and Eleanor Sims, "The *Nahj al-Faradis* of Sultan Abu Sa'id ibn Sultan Muhammad ibn Miranshah: An Illustrated Timurid Ascension-Text of the 'Interim' Period," *Journal of the David Collection* 4 (2014): 88–147.
8. Séguy, *Miraculous Journey of Mahomet*, plate 45 (53v); Gruber, *Timurid Book of Ascension*, 388.
9. For the expression "moral catechism," see Lange, "Introducing Hell in Islamic Studies," 17.
10. For the most recent and thorough discussion of illustrated Safavid and Ottoman "Augury Books," see Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı, eds., *Falnama: The Book of Omens* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2009).
11. Published in Farhad and Bağcı, *Falnama*, 191–92, cat. 55. For a detailed discussion of this Last Judgment scene and related Safavid paintings of hell, see Christiane Gruber, "Curse Signs: The Artful Rhetoric of Hell in Safavid Iran," in *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, ed. Christian Lange (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 297–335; and for an analysis of another *Falnama* hell painting, see Rachel Parikh, *The Khalili Falnama* (London: Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
12. For descriptions of these punishments in the Qur'an, see, for example, 17:99, 25:36, and 54:48. On punitive metamorphosis (*maskh*), engulfing (*khasf*), and lapidation (*qadhf*), see Uri Rubin, "Apes, Pigs, and the Islamic Identity," *Israel Oriental Studies* 17 (1997): 89–105; and Ilse Lichtenstadter, "And Become Ye Accursed Apes," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1991): 153–75. On blackened faces as a sign of damnation, see Christian Lange, "On That Day When Faces Will be White or Black (Q3: 106): Towards a Semiology of the Face in Arabo-Islamic Traditions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127, no. 4 (October–December 2007): 429–55.

13. On Ottoman "Conditions of Resurrection" texts and images, see Osman Yıldız, *Ahval-i kiyamet: Orta Osmanlıca dönemine ait bir dil yadigârı* (Istanbul: Şûle Yayınları, 2002); Christiane Gruber, "Signs of the Hour: Eschatological Imagery in Islamic Book Arts," *Ars Orientalis* 44 (2014): 49–52; and Metin And, *Minyatürlerle Osmanlı-İslâm Mitologyası* (Istanbul: Akbank, 1998), 240–65.
14. On the total destruction (*fana'*) of everything (mountains, seas, sun, and moon) except for God on the Day of Judgment, see Smith and Haddad, *Islamic Understanding of Death*, 70–73; and John Macdonald, "The Day of Resurrection," *Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (June 1966): 130.
15. For a rendition of the *Ma'rifatnama* in modern Turkish, see Ibrahim Hakkı Erzurumlu, *Mârifetnâme (Tam Metin)*, ed. M. Faruk Meyan (Istanbul: Bedir Yayınevi, 1999).
16. On this illustrated *Ma'rifatnama* manuscript and its double-page cosmographical diagram, see Norah Titley, *Miniatures from Turkish Manuscripts: A Catalogue and Subject Index of Paintings in the British Library and British Museum* (London: British Library, 1981), 48, cat. 40; Ahmet Karamustafa, "Cosmographical Diagrams," in *The History of Cartography*, vol. 2, book 1, *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, ed. John Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 88, fig. 3.18; and Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 138–40, figs. 7.5 and 7.6.
17. Islamic textual sources describe the *sirat* as a "hairpin curve," which the saved cross to enter paradise and from which the damned fall into hell; see Fritz Meier, "The Ultimate Origin and the Hereafter in Islam," in *Islam and its Cultural Divergence: Studies in Honor of Gustav E. von Grunebaum*, ed. Girdhari L. Tikku (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 103.
18. Peter Chelkowski, "Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran," *Muqarnas* 6 (1989): 98–111; Hādī Sayf, *Naqqāshī-i qahvah'khānah/"Coffee-House" Painting*, 3rd edition (Tehran: Reza 'Abbasi Museum, 1990).
19. On Qajar-period depictions of the Battle of Karbala, see Ulrich Marzolph, "The Visual Culture of Iranian Twelver-Shi'ism in the Qajar Period," *Shii Studies Review* 3, no. 1–2 (April 2019): 133–86. Yazid (Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya) was the second caliph of the Umayyad caliphate (661–750).
20. On the shrine's tile panels, see Atefeh Seyed Mousavi, *Narrative Illustrations on Qajar Tilework in Shiraz*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Verlag für Orientkunde, 2018), 403. For a comparative Qajar shrine near the city of Kashan and its narrative tilework, see Maria Vittoria Fontana, "Paintings in the Imamzada Shahzada Ibrahim," *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1–2 (1997–99): 144–51.
21. Author's interview with the artist, August, 2018. For further information on Charafeddine's *Divine Comedy*, see https://chazacharafeddine.com/work/1/divine-comedy-book-2015 (accessed December 18, 2019).

1 **Ibrahim Hakkı Erzurumlu (d. 1780, Ottoman lands)**
***Ma'rifatnama* (Book of Gnosis)**
Ottoman lands, Erzurum
1245 AH/1829–30
Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper
Closed: H. 6⁵⁄₁₆ x W. 2¹⁵⁄₁₆ in. (16 x 7.5 cm)
New York Public Library, Spencer Collection, Turk ms. 12, folios 14v, 15r

This double-page cosmic diagram appears in the *Ma'rifatnama* ("Book of Gnosis") by Ibrahim Hakkı Erzurumlu, an ethico-mystical encyclopedia that brings together discussions on Muslim theology, cosmology, and astrology.[1] Included in an Ottoman manuscript copy of the text made in 1829–30, this particular schematic rendering serves as a capstone to the work's introduction describing God's throne, the celestial spheres, the Day of Judgment, and heaven and hell.[2]

The double-page images are not solely cosmic: they also represent, on the right, Mecca (with the Ka'ba, Islam's most sacred site) and, on the left, Jerusalem (as the locus of resurrection).[3] Both images also depict the heavenly spheres, the two celestial trees, God's pen, and the "well-preserved tablet" (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*) in their upper sections, while the lower registers include the layers (*tabaqat*) of hell (Jahannam), the infernal Zaqqum tree, and a pot of molten liquid that will be force-fed to sinners. This pot is located below the bridge (*sirat*), a razor-thin passageway that souls must cross to arrive in heaven, or from which they fall into hell if damned.

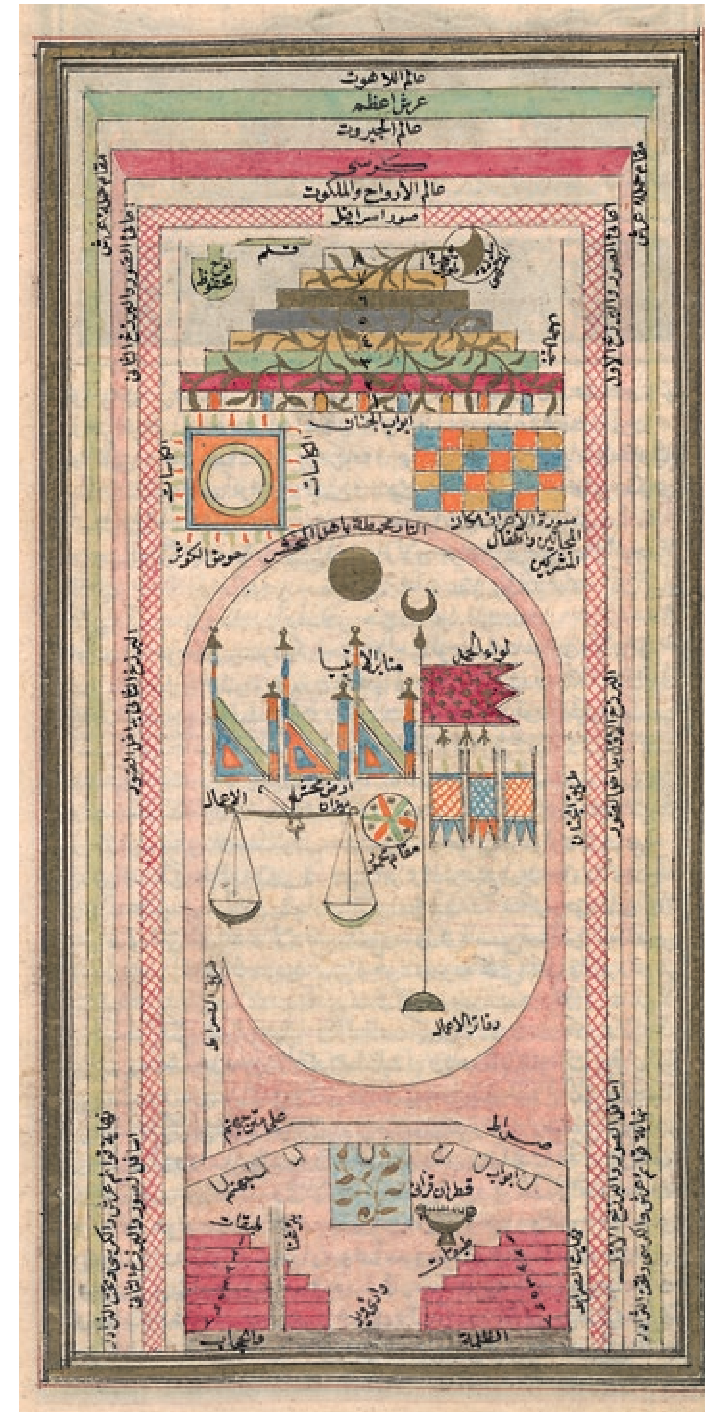
These types of cosmic pictograms highlight how the chthonic regions could be the subject of schematization in Islamic eschatological thought and painting during the modern period. CG

References

1. Ali Akbar Ziaee, *Islamic Cosmology and Astronomy: Ibrahim Hakki's Marifetname* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010).

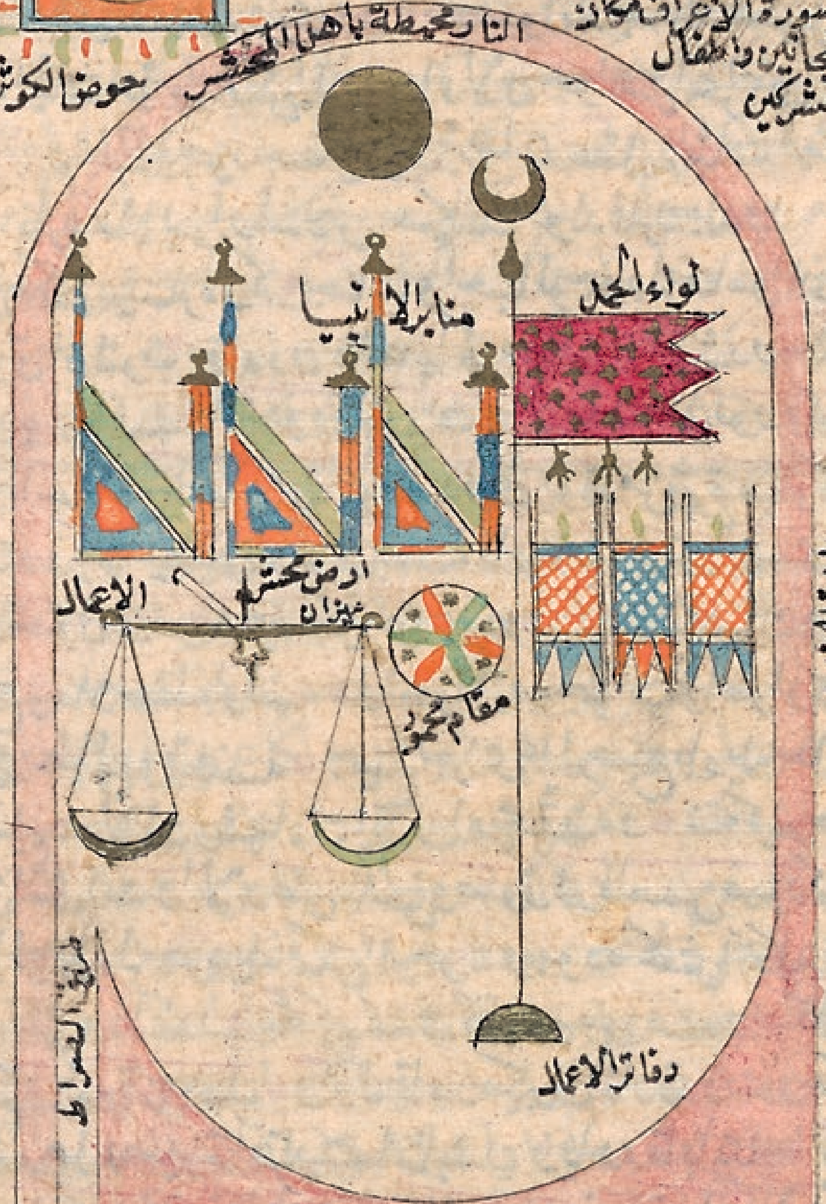
2. Ibrahim Hakkı Erzurumlu, *Mârifetnâme (Tam Metin)*, ed. M. Faruk Meyan (Istanbul: Bedir Yayınevi, 1999), 45–46.

3. For a further discussion of double-page cosmic paintings included in *Ma'rifatnama* manuscripts, see Ahmet Karamustafa, "Cosmographical Diagrams," in *The History of Cartography*, vol. 2, book 1, *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, ed. John Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 88; and Christiane Gruber, "Signs of the Hour: Eschatological Imagery in Islamic Book Arts," *Ars Orientalis* 44 (2014): 52–55. For the double-page painting illustrated here, see Barbara Schmitz, *Islamic Manuscripts in the New York Public Library* (New York: Oxford University Press: New York Public Library, 1992), 270–72, cat. no. IV.6.

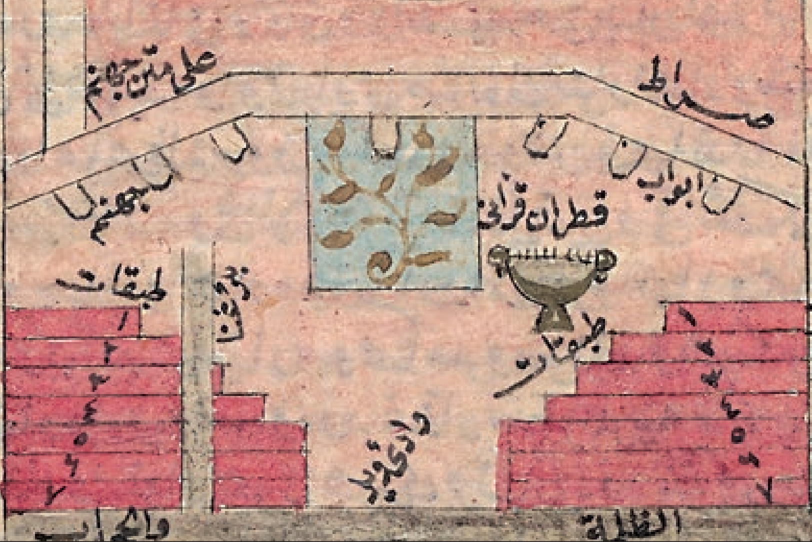


Page 78: detail of cat. no. 21, p. 133
Pages 80–81: detail of cat. no. 4, p. 93
Pages 84–85: detail of cat. no. 1

ابواب الجنان
حوض الكوثر
صورة الاعراف مكان المجانين والاطفال المشركين

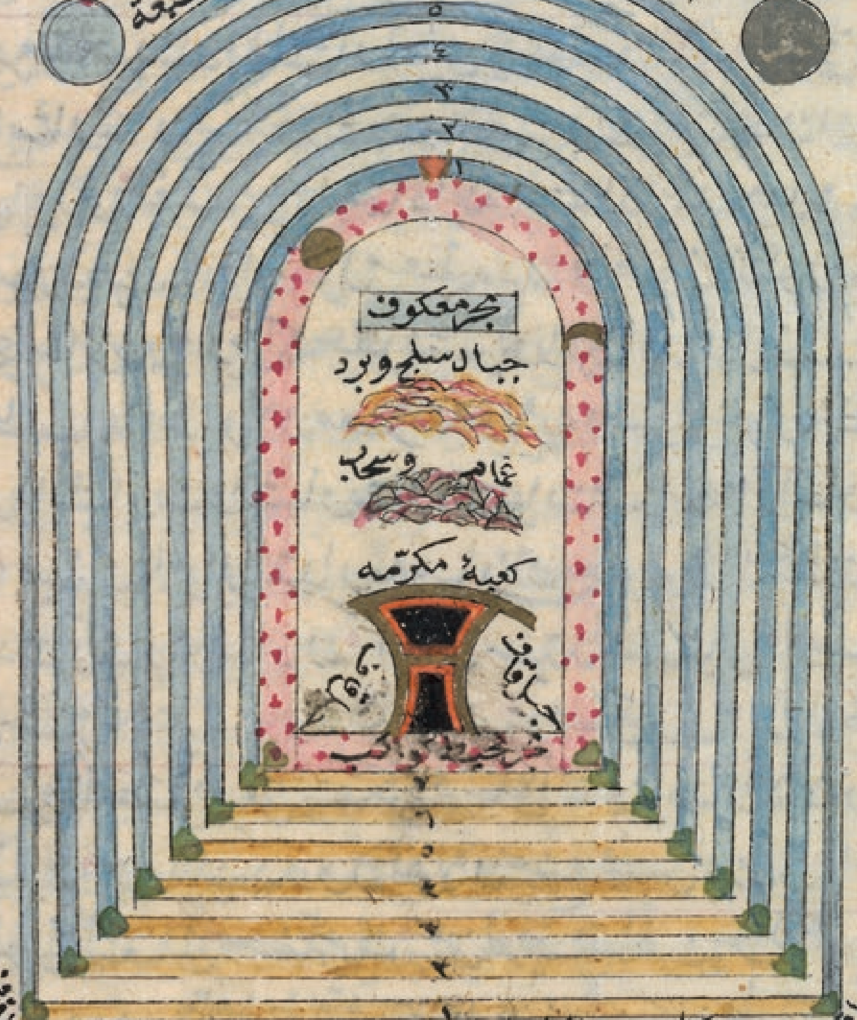


النار محيطة باهل المحشر
لواء الحمد
منابر الانبيا
ميزان
الاعمال
مقام محمود
دفاتر الاعمال

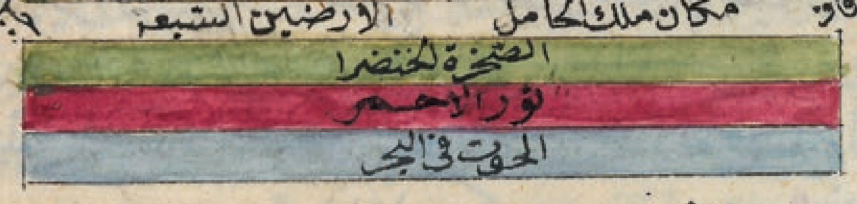


صراط
على متن جهنم
طبقات
قطران

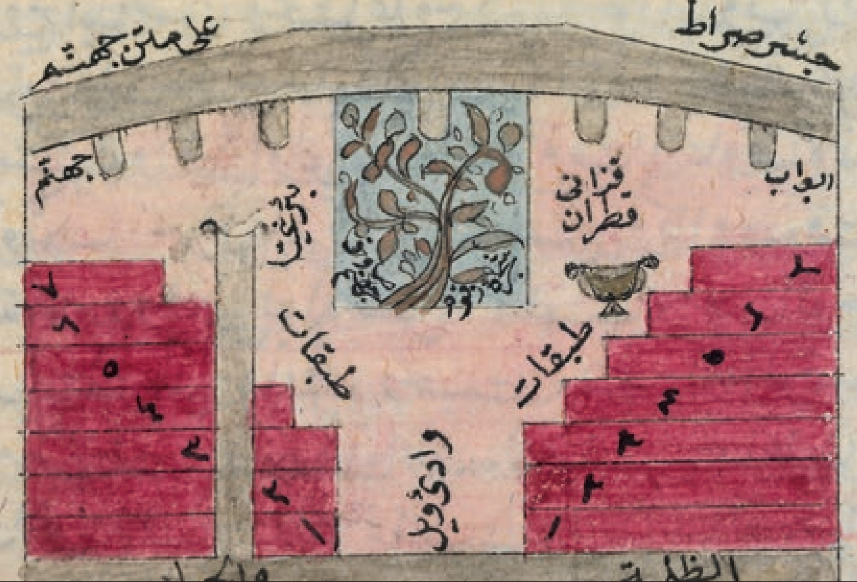
ابواب الجنان
حجب الملائكه
جوهر ليل
جوهر نهار



السموات السبعة
جبال ثلج وبرد
غمام وسحاب
كعبة مكرمه



مكان ملك الحامل
الارضين السبعة
الصخرة الخضرا
ثور الاحمر
الحوت في البحر



جسر صراط
على متن جهنم
قطران
طبقات

5 **Day of Judgment, Folio from a Manuscript of the *Falnama* (Book of Omens)**
Iran, Tabriz
Safavid period (1501–1722), ca. 1555
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
H. 23 1/16 x W. 17 3/16 in. (58.5 x 43.7 cm)
Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of Stuart Cary Welch, Jr., 1999.302

The Day of Judgment is a theme rarely depicted in Islamic painting. When illustrated, it tends to be embedded in manuscripts made during the sixteenth century, at which time millennial anxieties (per the *hijri* calendar) were running high. One of the most elaborate examples appears in the *Falnama* ("Book of Omens") made for the Safavid monarch Shah Tahmasp I (reigned 1524–76), a staunch proponent of Twelver Shiʻism in Iran.[1] This work survives as a single-page painting separated from its original manuscript, its accompanying augury text unfortunately lost.

The composition is divided structurally and thematically into three horizontal registers. The bottom register shows groups of males and females, the damned turning gray in skin tone and transforming into various animals; the middle register depicts the standing Prophet Muhammad (ca. 570–632) and seated Imam ʻAli (601–661), both of whom wear white facial veils, interceding on behalf of their followers while, on the left, the angels Michael and Israfil hold the scales of justice and blow the trumpet of resurrection, respectively; and the top register is populated by eleven seated figures and a bundle of gold flames on either side of the heavenly "Lote Tree of the Limit" (*sidrat al-muntaha*).[2]

The eleven figures represent the Shiʻi imams, while Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, is depicted as a confluence of radiant light. Their presence in paradise and ʻAli's position as co-intercessor on the Day of Judgment craft a clear Twelver Shiʻi view of salvation, revealing the extent to which eschatological imagination has been the subject of sectarian contestation in Islamic lands. CG

References

1. For a discussion of this painting, see Christiane Gruber, "Curse Signs: The Artful Rhetoric of Hell in Safavid Iran," in *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, ed. Christian Lange (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 297–335; and Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı, eds., *Falnama: The Book of Omens* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2009), 190–91, cat. no. 55.

2. On the punitive metamorphosis of the skin turning gray, see Christian Lange, "On That Day When Faces Will be White or Black (Q3:106): Towards a Semiology of the Face in Arabo-Islamic Traditions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127, no. 4 (October–December 2007): 429–55.

Pages 94–95: detail of cat. no. 15, p. 115

6 **‘Abbas Al-Musavi (Iran)**
Battle of Karbala
Iran, Isfahan
Qajar period (1794–1925), late 19th–early 20th century
Oil on canvas
H. 68½ x W. 133 in. (174 x 337.8 cm)
Brooklyn Museum, New York, Gift of K. Thomas Elghanayan in honor of Nourollah Elghanayan, 2002.6

This large-scale cloth painting (*parda*) depicts the Battle of Karbala (680), at which time Husayn (626–680), grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (ca. 570–632), and his followers were massacred by the military forces of the Umayyad caliph Yazid I (647–683). Shi‘i communities commemorate the battle and its martyrs in tales, performances, and liturgies during the month of Muharram. In the Qajar period, these mourning ceremonies were supported by royal patronage and they also thrived in popular spheres.[1] Through picture storytelling (*parda-khwani*), narrators recounted the major episodes of this tragic event by performing in the streets and coffeehouses.[2]

In its central scene, this *parda* depicts Husayn’s half-brother Abu’l-Fadl ‘Abbas (647–680) cleaving the enemy soldier Marid b. Sudayf with a single slice of his sword. To the left, Husayn consoles his dying son, ‘Ali-Akbar (662–680). Small scenes in the background and in a series of vignettes at the left and bottom recount related events during and after the battle. The eschatological subjects on the right fit the Battle of Karbala within a larger salvific landscape. A guardian demon pushes the damned into the growling mouth of hell, while the Last Judgment depicts the Angel Michael weighing the deeds of the deceased. In paradise, Imam ‘Ali (601–661) welcomes Hurr b. Yazid al-Riyahi (died 680), a general of Yazid’s army who changed allegiance and died as the battle’s first martyr. As exemplified in this painting, in the Islamic imaginary both heaven and hell can be conceptualized in overtly sectarian terms, a practice also evident in the sixteenth-century Persian augury painting of the Day of Judgment (see cat. no. 5).   CG

References

1. Ulrich Marzolph, “The Visual Culture of Twelver Shi‘ism in the Qajar Period,” *Shii Studies Review* 3, no. 1-2 (2019): 147–57.

2. For picture storytelling, see Peter Chelkowski, “Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran,” *Muqarnas* 6 (1989): 98–111; and Peter Chelkowski, “Popular Arts: Patronage and Piety,” in *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch, 1785–1925*, ed. Layla Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum of Art in association with I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 90–97. For coffeehouse performance, see Hādī Sayf, *Naqqāshī-i qahvah’khānah/“Coffee-House” Painting*, 3rd edition (Tehran: Reza ‘Abbasi Museum, 1990).

21 **The Prophet Muhammad at the Gates of Hell (recto), The Prophet Muhammad Beholds the Demonic Tree, called Zaqqum (verso), painting in a manuscript copy of al-Sara'i's *Nahj al-Faradis* (Paths of Paradise)**
Herat (present-day Afghanistan)
Ca. 1465
Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper
H. 16³⁄₁₆ x W. 11¹¹⁄₁₆ in. (41.1 x 29.7 cm)
The David Collection, Copenhagen, 14/2014

Like other "books of ascension," the *Nahj al-Faradis* (Paths of paradise) describes and illustrates the ascent of the Prophet Muhammad (ca. 570–632) through the celestial spheres, his encounter with angels and prophets, his dialogue with God, and his visits to heaven and hell.[1] This manuscript copy of the text, written in Chaghatay Turkish and transcribed in Uighur script, was made in Herat, in present-day Afghanistan, around 1465.[2] The lavish pictorial cycle includes more than fifty paintings that depict Muhammad's celestial ascension in a style that combines Central Asian and Chinese Buddhist motifs. One of these paintings begins the series of images that illustrates Muhammad's tour of hell. In this depiction, the Prophet Muhammad is shown sitting on al-Buraq, his human-headed flying stead, as he arrives at the fiery gates of hell (Jahannam). The two doors, rendered as if constructed of Chinese lacquerware with gold-painted decoration, are pried open by the angel Gabriel (on the right) and the gatekeeper of hell, or Malik (on the left), who holds a mace and gestures to the Prophet. The reverse side of this folio depicts Muhammad's first stop in hell, where he beholds the infernal Zaqqum tree, which bears putrid fruits that are force-fed to sinners, some of whose tongues are cut by demons. CG

References

1. On Islamic "books of ascension," see Frederick S. Colby, *Narrating Muhammad's Night Journey: Tracing the Development of the Ibn 'Abbas Ascension Discourse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Christiane Gruber and Frederick S. Colby, eds., *The Prophet's Ascension: Cross-Cultural Encounters with the Islamic Mi'raj Tales* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, ed., *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'islam: Ascensions célestes et itinéraires spirituels* (Louvain: Peeters, 1996).

2. For a discussion of the *Nahj al-Faradis* illustrated manuscript, see Eleanor Sims, "The *Nahj al-Faradis* of Sultan Abu Sa'id ibn Sultan Muhammad ibn Miranshah: An Illustrated Timurid Ascension Text of the 'Interim' Period," *Journal of the David Collection* 4 (2014): 88–147; Christiane Gruber, *The Timurid Book of Ascension (Mi'rajnama): A Study of Text and Image in a Pan-Asian Context* (Valencia: Patrimonio Ediciones, 2008), 328–36; Gruber, "The Path to Paradise: Jerusalem in Islamic Ascension Texts and Images," in *Every People Under Heaven: Jerusalem, c. 1000–1400*, ed. Barbara Boehm and Melanie Holcomb (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), 295–99; and Kjeld von Folsach and Joachim Meyer, *The Human Figure in Islamic Art: Holy Men, Princes, and Commoners* (Copenhagen: The David Collection, 2017), 132–35, cat. nos. 27–28.

Cat. no. 21 recto

Pages 128–29: detail of cat. no. 28, p. 146

Cat. no. 21 verso

22 **Leaf from *Siyer-I Nebi*—Raining Book of Deeds**
Turkey
Ca. 1550–1650
Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on polished paper
H. 5⅞ x W. 3¾ in. (14.9 x 9.5 cm)
Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Lewis Tu 4

23 **Leaf from *Siyer-I Nebi***
Turkey
Ca. 1550–1650
Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on polished paper
H. 5¾ x W. 3⅜ in. (14.6 x 8.6 cm)
Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Lewis Tu 5

24 **Leaf from *Siyer-I Nebi***
Turkey
Ca. 1550–1650
Manuscript page; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper
H. 5¾ x W. 3¼ in. (14.6 x 8.3 cm)
Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Lewis Tu 6

25 ***Ahwal al-Qiyama* (Conditions of Resurrection)**
Ottoman lands
Late 16th or early 17th century
Manuscript pages; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper
Each page: H. 8 7/16 x W. 5 5/16 in. (21.5 x 13.5 cm)
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. oct. 1596, folios 28v, 34v, 43v, 52r

Ottoman copies of the *Ahwal al-Qiyama* ("Conditions of Resurrection") anticipate and envision the end of days.[1] Several illustrated manuscripts of this apocalyptical text produced at the end of the sixteenth century depict themes that reflect millennial anxieties. These include, among others, the gathering of the souls on the Day of Judgment, the raining down of books of deeds, the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad (ca. 570–632) on behalf of his community, and the rewards of heaven and punishments of hell.

While many scenes are ecumenical in character, others deliver potentially sectarian messages. For example, one painting depicts the Prophet Muhammad, his head subsumed by a flaming gold-green aureole, accompanied by three haloed men and a group of turbaned individuals, as three angels hold a double-headed dragon that roars flames of fire towards several petrified souls (cat. no. 25, far left). Despite the lack of textual details, it is possible that this painting offers an eschatological explication of a sectarian nature, by which only three of the so-called rightly guided caliphs (*al-rashidun*), distinguished by their gold halos, are allowed to accompany Muhammad at the time of intercession. As a result, the fourth member of the *rashidun*—that is, ʿAli (601–661), the figurehead of Shiʿi Islam—appears to have been excised visually from the apocalyptical domain, his intercessory powers on the Day of Judgment thus denied.

With the possible removal of ʿAli, the viewer is encouraged to "read" the image through a pro-Sunni sectarian lens. This type of sectarian messaging likewise could be offered in favor of the Shiʿi cause, as is the case for the Persian *Last Judgment* and *Battle of Karbala* paintings (see cat. nos. 5 and 6). CG

References

1. For a discussion of *Ahwal al-Qiyama* manuscript paintings depicting heaven and hell, as well as further references, see Gruber, "Signs of the Hour," 49–52.

Cat. no. 22

Cat. no. 23

Cat. no. 24

من اخيه وامه وابيه وصاحبته وبنيه واول كونك
هيبتندن الياس پيغمبر عليه السلام قاتنه وارميه • نقد

پيغمبرلر وارايسه چغرشه لر نفسي وانفسي ديلر محمد مصطفى

ويوزلرينك نوري بلقيا بتيلري اق اولا قوله تعالى وهو
اسرع الحاسبين ديدكلري بونلر اوله حسابلرن كگز ويره لو

وبرساعت ايچنده اولا • قوله تعالى فاما من اوتي كتابه

ييلاق يول نجه بينه مالك طاموب قفيه كروطاموقصد قيله
بونلر كروجاغرشلر بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ديلر بوكرطامو

بونلردن اوج بيك ييلاق يول نجه • مالك كروطاموبي قاقيا

كبي دركنلر قيامت احوالندن اوتوردي نته كم قرانده بيوردي

فهي يومئذ واهية اول كون قتي فيغولوا اولالر نته كم قرانده
ياد قلدي والملك على ارجائها فرشته لر جوريشه لر ايلديلر كه

Cat. no. 25