



DŪZAK

DŪZAK (Av. *dužanhu*: Yt. 19.44, *daožahu*:- Vd. 19.47; OIr. **daušaxva*:-; Mid. Pers. *dwšhw*/*došaxw*/*dušox*; Inscriptional Middle Persian *dwšhw*; Man. Mid. Pers. *dwšwx*/*dušox*; Man. Parth. *dwjx*/*dōžax*; Arm. lw. *džox*; lit., “evil existence”) “hell”.

In the Zoroastrian doctrine of the future life *dūzak* consists of a series of grades, extending to the restoration (*frašegird*), in which the damned are punished for their earthly misdeeds, in order to bring about their spiritual and corporeal purgation and final salvation. Aryan eschatological belief in heaven and hell, already identified in the *Rigveda* (10.14.8) as a paradise on high and a shadowy netherworld respectively (Boyce, *Zoroastrianism*, I, p. 115), was expressed by Zoroaster himself in the Gathas and elaborated in Younger Avestan and Middle Persian texts (see [ESCHATOLOGY](#)). In the *Yasna* (46.10-11) the prophet pronounced that “everyone who hearkens to his commandments will cross the bridge of the separator” (*AirWb.*, col. 596; Insler, p. 83) or of the “accumulator” (Kellens) into heaven, a theme elaborated with varying details in Middle Persian texts (see [ČINWAD PUHL](#); [DĒN](#)). His opponents the Karapans (pagan priests) and the Kavis will, however, fail to cross the bridge and will become “guests of the house of the deceit/lie”; that is, they will suffer in hell (Insler, p. 83). The prophet also referred to hell as a place where the wicked experience “a long life of darkness, foul food and crying/word of woe” (Y. 31.20; cf. Insler, p. 83; Boyce, 1979, p. 279) and as Ačista- Demāna- Manah- “the abode of worst thinking/purpose” (Y. 32.13; cf. Insler, p. 49; Boyce, 1984, p. 37; see below). Zoroaster thus preached that the wicked who have adhered to the



lie are destined to suffer pain in hell, which, because of its demonic nature, is necessarily a creation of the evil spirit (Y. 30.4, 31.1; cf. Insler, p. 33; Boyce, 1984, p. 35).

Among Younger Avestan texts the canonical account of the fate of the soul after death is preserved in the fragmentary Haðōxt Nask. The third chapter is devoted to the fate of the wicked soul. When a sinner dies the soul hovers near the head for three days: “At the end of the third night . . . it is as if the soul of the wicked man were in a wilderness and breathing in stench.” Then from the northerly quarter (i.e., from hell) a foul-smelling wind blows on it. The first step that the soul takes is “evil thought,” the second “evil speech,” and the third “evil deed” (the first, second, and third forecourts of hell respectively). With the fourth step the wicked soul enters “endless darkness” (i.e., hell proper; Boyce, 1984, pp. 81-82; *Avesta*, tr. Darmesteter, II, pp. 311-12). These four grades later came to be considered by most authorities as the canonical definition of hell.

The future life is treated in other sections of the Avesta, some of which are preserved in Middle Persian epitome in the *Dēnkard* (chaps. VIII, IX). In the Pahlavi Sūdgar Nask hell is described as dark, abysmal, obnoxious, foul, close, and frightful (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, pp. 808-09; West, 1892, pp. 209-10). The cursory accounts of a few types of punishment for sinners suggest that this *nask* may originally have dealt with the topic in greater detail (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 806; West, 1892, p. 205). In the Pahlavi version of the Spand Nask hell is also described as the most abysmal and worst of places, where the wicked are to be punished in accordance with their misdeeds (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, pp. 691-92; West, 1892, pp. 32-34).

In the thirty-fourth chapter of the *Bundahišn* there is a vivid account of the resurrection (*ristāxēz*) and the final body, that is, ultimate existence (*tan ī pasēn*). In the 12th millennium of the Zoroastrian world people will gradually lose their appetites, and finally, when they can live without eating, Sōšyans (the savior, a posthumous son of Zoroaster) will be born and, with his helpers, will perform the Yasna and restore the dead. Then all the people of the world will assemble in their natural bodies, presided over by Isadwāstar (the proper name of Sōšyans); in a second reckoning the righteous will be separated from the wicked, who will be cast back into hell, in order to experience severe punishment for three days, this time in their material bodies. In the process of restoration the god Ādur and Airyaman will melt the metal contained in rocks and mountains, and it will surge in rivers through the world. All men,



regardless of their deserts, will pass through the molten metal and be purified. Then Sōšyans will immolate the bull Hadayans; from its rendered fat mixed with the white Hōm he will prepare ambrosia (*anōš* “[beverage of] immortality”), which all men will swallow, thus becoming immortal. The demons will be seized and destroyed by the Amahraspands (see [AMĒŠA SPĒNTA](#)) and Srōš; Ahreman (see [AHRIMAN](#)) and the archdemon *Āz* will be rendered powerless when Ohrmazd celebrates the gathic liturgy and will be driven from the world into the gloomy den from which they had emerged. Finally the molten metal will flow over hell, consuming its stench and impurity; hell will thus be swept clean and restored to the pure world (*Bundahišn*, TD2, chap. 34, pp. 282-92; Boyce, 1984, pp. 52-53).

In sharp contrast to all other accounts is that of the eminent 9th-century authority Manūščihr, son of Juwān-(Gušn-)Jam (see [DĀDESTĀN Ī DĒNĪG](#)), who put forward an unorthodox schema of the grades of hell, perhaps derived from the teaching of his eminent forefathers. In his version the souls of the wicked, upon departing the bodies, remain in one of three internal stages (*wimand*), in accordance with the degree of their misdeeds. Those whose evil deeds outweigh their good deeds dwell in the *hammistagān* of the wicked, also called “mixture” (*gumēzag*; cf. Av. *misvan gātu* “the place of the mixed”; Vd. 19.36); it is a frightful place, dark, foul, and grievous with pain. The second stage, “the worst existence” (*waddom axwān*, synonymous with *dōšaxw/dušox*), is the abode of dreadful demons; there all is punishment without comfort. The last stage is *drujasgān* (Av. *drujaskanā*– “abode of the *drujes*”; Vd. 19.41), the infernal abyss, the abode of the archdemon (*dēwān kamālīg*); it is the home of all gloom and evil. Collectively these three stages of the underworld constitute *dušox* “hell,” which is north, downward, underneath the earth, extending to the utmost declivity of the sky. Its gate is in the northern Arezūr ridge, on the peak of which the assembly of all demons is held (*Dādistān ī dēnīg*, chap. 32, pp. 65-68; West, 1880, pp. 74-75). Manūščihr, moreover, also described another *hammistagān* for the righteous, for souls whose meritorious deeds outweigh their sins but who are not good enough to enter directly into heaven (*Dādistān ī dēnīg*, chap. 24; West, 1880, p. 55). This singular conception of two *hammistagāns* contradicts all other authoritative teachings. In fact the word *hammistagān* is derived from Avestan *ham-miias*– “to be mixed in equal proportions” (*AirWb.*, col. 1190). It is said to be “the final (judgment) for those whose falsity and honesty are balanced” (Y. 33.1). In *Mēnōg ī xrad* (chap. 6.18) *hammistagān* is a place between hell and heaven, extending from the earth up to the station of the fixed stars, the abode of those whose sins and good works



are equal and who thus experience no suffering other than heat and cold. Unlike the purgatory of other revealed religions, the Mazdean *hammistagān* is not a preparatory stage for entering heaven.

The last house of hell is described in the *Mēnōg ī xrad* (chap. 7.27-31) as partly cold as the coldest ice and partly scorching hot, with wild rapacious animals and a foul stench; its darkness is so dense that it can be seized by hand. In the *Ardā Wirāz-nāmag*, a visionary revelation of the joys of heaven and retributions for misdeeds in the netherworld, the last stage of hell, situated beneath the *čīnwad* bridge, is depicted as a place far more frightful than the previous stations. It is a narrow pit, an abyss “to the bottom of which thousands of cries could not reach, as narrow as the distance between the ear and the eye, packed with the souls of sinners like hairs on the mane of a horse; no one sees the other, everyone feels lonely . . . extremely cold and fiery hot” (chap. 54.2-5).

The supposed immutability of the Mazdean principle of justice requires that even in hell punishment should fit the crime. The enforcement of this discipline is entrusted to the Amahraspand [Ardwahišt](#), who supervises and restrains the demons from punishing the damned more than is fitting (*Bundahišn*, TD2, chap. 26.35). According to the Pahlavi version of the Spand Nask, the punishment of the wicked in hell should be commensurate with their misdeeds (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 691; West, 1892, pp. 32-34). Similarly, in the Pahlavi version of the Sūdgar Nask it is enjoined that punishment (in the netherworld) should be meted out in accordance with the canon of the faith (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 505; West, 1892, p. 204).

For the Islamic period, see [HELL](#).

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