

The story of a Jew and a Mazdayasn

āzend ī jehūd ud mazdesn

The story of the Jew and the Mazdayasn belongs to the Perso-Aryan religious polemical literature that flourished in the Sasanian times. It uses the frame tale to prove the truth of the Good Religion (*dēn ī veh*). It was translated by the Persian scribes into Arabic in the early Arab-Islamic caliphate, and is preserved in the *Kitāb SIRR al-asrār* (the Book of the Secret of secrets).¹ It occurs in nearly identical form in the treatises of Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafā' (9th century) and also in the *Al-'Imta' wa al-Mu'anasa* (Enjoyment and Conviviality. Tawhīdī, 10th century). The book *SIRR al-asrār* was translated into Latin, entitled *Secretum Secretorum* –the long version has been made by Philippe de Tripoli around the year 1230.² It was later translated into (Old) English³, (Old) French⁴, etc. In these later versions, the Mage (Pers. Muγ, Arab. Majūs) was replaced by “Sarazin”, “Payen”, “Enchantere”. Notice that the Hebrew version of the *SIRR al-asrār* has omitted the story.⁵ A Persian version of this story is found in Aufī's collection of anecdotes (13th century).⁶

The translation offered here is based on Arabic and Persian versions of the story. It is followed by a Pārsīg version.

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¹ . See Mahmoud Manzalaoui, « The Pseudo-Aristotelian "Kitāb SIRR al-asrār". Facts and Problems », *Oriens*, Vol. 23/24 (1974), pp. 147-257.

Badawī states :

« هذه القصة يظهر أنها من وضع شعوبى يفضل المجوسية على الأديان السماوية أو على اليهودية على الأقل. » ١٤٠

² . *Secretum secretorum Aristotelis ad Alexandrum Magnum cum ejusdem tractatu de animae immortalitate : nunc primo adjecto*, Cambridge (Mass.), Omnisys, 1990.

³ . R. Steele, *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, London, 1898.

⁴ . D. Lorée, *Édition commentée du Secret des Secrets du Pseudo-Aristote*, Université Rennes 2, 2012.

⁵ . M. Gaster, “The Hebrew version of the Secretum Secretorum: a mediaeval treatise ascribed to Aristotle”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, I. Text, Oct., 1907, 879-912 ; II. Translation, 1908, 111-162

⁶ . سيدالدين محمد عوفى، جوامع الحكايات ولوامع الروايات، به تصحيح محمد معين، بخش اول،

تهران، ۱۳۳۵، ۱۰۶-۱۱۱.

English Translation:

Once upon a time, a Mazdayasn and a Jew were going together on the journey.⁷ The Jew was indigent and was walking on foot without any provision or any expenses of living. The Mazdayasn was opulent and was riding on his mule⁸ – trained at his liking – ; and he had on the mule all his necessaries for travelling – provisions, clothing, etc.

As they went speaking together by the way, the Mazdayasn said to the Jew: “What is your religion and creed, (O so-and-so⁹)?”

The Jew answered him: “I believe that in heaven is one god – he is the god of the children of Israel¹⁰ –, that I am his servant, I put my trust in him, and I request from him my daily food, long life, vigor, health, being secure from calamities, and victory over enemies; and of him I seek all the good for myself and also for him that is of my religion, of my faith, and of my creed. And it is lawful to me to shed the blood of him that is opposed to me in religion and creed, and and take from him his possessions and wife and children; and it is unlawful to me to help or advise or assist him, or to have any compassion for him (or to behave gently towards him). So this is my religious creed and faith which I have informed you of. Tell me now what is your religion and creed!”

The Mazdayasn said that: “My creed is this that I wish well to myself and to all others (peers), and I do not wish ill to any creature, neither to him that follows my law nor to him that disagree with me. I believe that animals should be treated well (with care), and we should not mistreat or abuse them; for any pain inflicted on an animal afflicts me and I become affected. And as much as I can I treat a friend or even an enemy with kindness and courtesy.”

⁷ . The Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafā' states, the « Mage » came from Kirmān and the Jew from Spāhān.

« أحدهما مجوسي من أهل كرمان، والآخر يهودي من أهل أصفهان »

According to Tawḥīdī, the « Mage » was from Ray and the Jew from Gay (name of old Spāhān).

« مجوسي من أهل الرّي، والآخر يهودي من أرض جيّ. »

⁸ . Arab. بغلة 'mule', Pers. اشتر (corr. استر)

⁹ . Tawḥīdī : يا فلان. Iḥwān : يا خوشاك. يا خوشاك [xwš'k] possibly from Hūža 'Elam' (Elam. Šūša), Armen. Իւնժիկ /xužik/ 'Susianer ; barbarian'.

¹⁰ . In the Iḥwān and also in the Al-Imtā' : « هو إله بني إسرائيل »

Then said the Jew: “But if you are treated with oppression and injustice, what shall you do?”

He replied: “I do not occupy myself with retribution and I do not offer any recompense except doing good, for I know that in heaven (the world of thought)¹¹ there is a God (a creator) Who is omniscient (and virtuous) and just (rightful) and wise, from Whom nothing is hidden of the affairs, great or small, of His creatures. He rewards the benefactors for their good deeds and punishes the male-factors for their evil deeds.”

The Jew said: “You spoke very well [from your point of view], your faith [also] is good; but it’s just a shame that the truth does not accompany this claim!”¹²

“But in what manner?”, said the Mazdayasn.

And the Jew answered, and said: “Behold, I am one of your fellow men, (like you I have a soul,) and you see that I am walking on foot, tired and hungry, while you are riding, full and well at ease.”

“You are right”, said the Mazdayasn, and alighted from his mule, spread his tablecloth, and gave him food and drink, and after he made him mount on his mule. The Jew mounted on the mule, and they continued the journey while they were speaking. As soon as the Jew noticed indications of fatigue in the face of his fellow traveler, he spurred on and rode off, leaving the Mazdayasn alone (in the middle of the wilderness).

The poor (Mazdayasnian) ran after him calling out: “(O Jew¹³) do not let my goodness be compensated by the badness, do not leave me alone in this wilderness to be killed by wild beast or be died out of thirst; please have pity on me as I had on you!”

The Jew said: “O Mage¹⁴, did I not tell you about my creed (that any one who is opposed to me in religious sect, it is lawful for me to shed his blood and to seize his possessions) and the manner thereof, and did you not tell me about yours? You have fulfilled your creed. I will now also fulfill mine.”

¹¹ . Arab. عالم را , في هذه السماء . Pers.

¹² . Arabic version : I do not see that you follow your religious order and act according to your faith.

¹³ . Tawhīdī : يا فلان . Iḥwān : يا خوشاك .

¹⁴ . Iḥwān : يا مغا .

Thus saying the Jew paid no heed to the cry of the Mazdayasn for help, and he urged on the mule for riding, so that he vanished from his sight. When the Mazdayasn gave up all hope of finding the Jew, and saw death coming to him, then he remembered his faith and creed as he had described to the Jew, that is, in heaven (the world of thought) was the Wise Lord Who requites, is munificent, recompenses, is compassionate, to Whom in creatures nothing is hidden. He rewards the benefactors for their good deeds and punishes the male-factors for their evil deeds.

Then he lifted up his head to heaven, and said: “O Lord, you know that I have thought and said and acted according to the religion, [now] I put my trust in you, confirm the truth of what I have said to the Jew¹⁵!”

Thus saying he continued on his way. Having gone a little farther he saw the mule which had thrown the Jew from its back, and was waiting for the arrival of its owner. The Jew was run down, wounded and stricken, on one side, and the mule was standing on the other. The Mazdayasn, upon seeing this state (of affairs), fell to his knees, and exulted with all his heart. Then he mounted on the mule and urged forward it, leaving the Jew in the gulf of perdition.

But the Jew cried after him, and said: “O Mage¹⁶, even though I did something evil, I verily did harm to myself, for from that evil I did not obtain any benefit (goodness), and from your goodness you did not receive any evil; you have benefited from your own good belief, and the penalty of the evil belief of mine turned back to my own person. Do assist your own creed (religion), and do not leave me alone and helpless in this wilderness!”

He lamented and wept to the point where the Mazdayasn felt sorry for him, and lifted him up on the mule, and brought him to the city, and entrusted him to his relations.

¹⁵ . Iḥwān: اليهودي خوشاك.

¹⁶ . Iḥwān : يا مغا , Tawḥīdī : يا فلان , Pers. ای برادر .

āzend ī jehūd ud mazdesn

būd ī ka jehūd-ē jumā mazdesn-ē hamrāh šud hend. jehūd mard-ē būd škōh, ud payādag ud atōšag ud abēbārag hamē raft. ud pārsīg būd hangad, abar astar ī ray ī frahādag nišastag, hamāg bār ī rāh –az tōšag ud vastarg ud cē – bastag. ud ped rāh hamsoxan būd hend.

mazdesn ō jehūd pursīd kū : hān ī tō kēš cē, ud vurravišn ī tō cōn ?

jehūd guft kū : vurravišn ud kēš ī man ē kū : dānam kū ped asmān dādār-ē-m ast kē abesar ī dahišn abar sar ī man nihād ēsted, ud an peristagīh ōy kunem, u-š ped panāhīh gīrem, ud mizd ud pih ī rōzīg az hambārag ī yān ī ōy x^vāham, ud harv nēkīh az ōy x^vēš rāy zayam, ud ōy-iz rāy kē ped kēš ud ristag ī man hamdādestān ; bē harv kē-š kēš hambasān, ā-m pādixšāy xūn ī ōy rixtan ud x^vāstag, zan ud frazend ī ōy stadan, u-m nē pādixšāy ayyārīh ī ōy kirdan, ayāb abāg ōy uskārdan ayāb hambaxtan, ayāb mihr ud dilsōzag ud abaxšāyišn pediš burdan.

ka jehūd ēdōn bē guft, ō mazdesn pursīd kū : tū-iz kēš ud vurravišn ī x^vad gōb dā-m pēdāg bē baved.

mazdesn guft kū : an vurravam kū x^vad ud hamāg mardōmān rāy nēkīh abāyam ; ud ēc dām ud dahišn vad nē menam, ud kas-iz anāgīh nē x^vāham, cē hamkēš cē judkēš. vehīh ud nēkīh cand tuvān hād ō dōst ud dušmen handāzam. agar az kas must-ē vēnam, tāvān nē handāzam, ud kēn nē tōzam, ud pādīfrāh ī ōy bē vehīh enyā nē kunam. vurravam kū hamāg dām ī gētīg nēk sazed pahristan ; cē ka gyānvar-ē bēšend, an bēšumand bavam. Ud harv mardōm ud dām rāy šādīh ud drustīh kāmam.

jehūd guft kū : bē agar-t bēš ud āzār ud ōrēz kunend ?

mazdesn guft kū : abēgumān ham kū gētīg rāy dādār-ē ast visptuvān ud dādīg ud vispāgāh ī-š ēc kār ī gēhānīgān, x^vard ayāb stabr, keh ayāb meh, nē nihuftag ; kirbakkarān ped vehīh pādāšnēned, ud anākkirdārān ped vadīh pādīfrāhēned.

jehūd guft kū : soxan-t xūb, ud vurravišn-it nēk. bē kāc rāstīh gōbišn-t abāg būd hē.

mazdesn abd sahist : cōn-t nišān ī drōv dīd ?

jehūd guft : ēnak, an ham tan-ē az hamcihrān ī tō. ud tū x^vad abar bārag ī rāhvār nišastag, ud sāzag ud tōšag az gōšag ī pālān

ābixtag, u-m bahr aziš nē baxšē, u-m zamān-ē ped bārag ī x^vad
nē nišāyē. pēdāg kū ped vurravišn ī x^vad nē ravē !

mazdesn guft: ōhāy, rāst gōbē.

pas mazdesn az astar frōd mad, ud x^varišn sāzag frāz vistard,
ud x^varišn ud āb ō jehūd frāz burd dā jehūd sagr būd. pas
jehūdāg abar bārag nišast, ud x^vad payādag hamē raft. u-šān
soxan hamē vyāvurd. jehūd dā nišān ī māndagīh ped cihrag ī
mazdesn dīd, astar ped avištāb bē rānd, ud ōy ī mazdesn ēvtāg
ped dašt bē hišt.

acārag vāng kird kū : pādāšn ī nekīh vad mā kun, u-m andar
ēd viyābān ēvtāg mā hil kū-m dad kušād ayāb az anābīh anast
bavān !

jahūd guft kū : nē-t guft-am kū kēš ī man ē kū harv kē-š kēš
hambasān, ā xūn ī ōy šāyem rixtan ud x^vāstag ī ōy man rāy
sazed ?

ēd bē guft, ud hamzamān pāydār grān kird, ud astar bē rānd,
dā az cašm ī pārsīg apēdāgīhist. ōy acārag zamān ēcand az pas ī
gard ī ōy šud, dā didīgar hān gard nē vindād.

ka az vindišn ī jehūdāg anumēd būd, nišast, rōy ō asmān kird
ud guft : yazdā ! hān ī-m kird, ōstīgān ped hudāgīh ī tō kird.
guft-am kū gētīg rāy dādār-ē ast ī pādīfrāhēnīdār ī hudāg ī
pādāšnēnīdār ī x^vābar ; ō kirbakkarān nekīh handāzed, ud
vadgarān puhl zaned. parmānag ī man ped ēn dar abārōn mā
vardēn, ud dād ī man az ōy ī mustgar bē stān !

ka ēn niyāyišn ud xvāhišn bē kird, rōy ō rāh nihād, ud bē raft.
ka ēk do frasang raft, astar ī x^vad dīd kē jehūdāg az pušt ī x^vēš
abgandag, hannām ī ōy hamāg xastag ud škastag, ud andar vēm ī
anastīh ōbastag ; ud astar anī gyāg ēstādāg, hangār kū ō rasišn ī
x^vadāy pand pād hē. mazdesn cōn hān estām dīd ped rōy ōbast,
u-š vāng ī šādīh ō asmān burd. pas abar astar nišast, u-š jehūdāg
ped vēm ī anastīh hišt, u-š uštar rānd.

jehūd vāng abgand kū : brādarā ! man agar vad kird, bē-z
abāg x^vad kird. cōn man rāy az vadīh nek nē mad, ud tō rāy az
nekīh vad nē jast, ud bar ī huvurravišnīh ī tō ō tō frāz mad, u-m
tāvān ī dušvurravišnīh ī x^vēš ō man abāz mad, nūn dastyārīh ī
kēš ī x^vad kun, u-m andar ēn viyābān atōšag mā hil !

jehūd and bē nālīd cand-īš mazdesn abaxšīd, u-š ōy abar astar
ī x^vēš nišīyēnīd, ud ō šahrestān āvurd ud ō nazdīkān ud xvēšān ī
ōy abespurd.

frazaft ped drod