

University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

3-1-2011

Death and Its Beyond in Early Judaism and Medieval Jewish Philosophy

Adem Irmak
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd>



Part of the [Jewish Studies Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Irmak, Adem, "Death and Its Beyond in Early Judaism and Medieval Jewish Philosophy" (2011). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 306.

<https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/306>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, dig-commons@du.edu.

Death and Its Beyond in Early Judaism and Medieval Jewish Philosophy

Abstract

Afterlife and the concept of soul in Judaism is one of the main subjects that are discussed in the academia. There are some misassumptions related to hereafter and the fate of the soul after departing the body in Judaism. Since the Hebrew Bible does not talk about the death and afterlife clearly, some average people and some scholars claim that there is nothing relevant to the hereafter. However, in this study I put the Hebrew Bible to conversation with ancient cult of the dead and Medieval Jewish philosophers Saadya Gaon and Yehuda Halevi to proof the existence of afterlife and immortality of the soul in Judaism; even though Judaism is defined as the religion of this world and present time by some Jews and described by some scholars as the religion that does not have an afterlife concept in it.

Document Type

Thesis

Degree Name

M.A.

Department

Religious Studies

First Advisor

Alison Schofield, Ph.D.

Second Advisor

Carl Raschke

Third Advisor

Sarah Pessin

Keywords

Afterlife, Death, Immortality, Judaism, Medieval, Soul

Subject Categories

Arts and Humanities | Jewish Studies | Religion

Publication Statement

Copyright is held by the author. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

DEATH AND ITS BEYOND IN EARLY JUDAISM AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH
PHILOSOPHY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Adem Irmak

March 2011

Advisor: Dr. Alison Schofield

©Copyright by Adem Irmak 2011

All Rights Reserved

Author: Adem Irmak

Title: DEATH AND ITS BEYOND IN EARLY JUDAISM AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

Advisor: Dr. Alison Schofield

Degree Date: March 2011

Abstract

Afterlife and the concept of soul in Judaism is one of the main subjects that are discussed in the academia. There are some misassumptions related to hereafter and the fate of the soul after departing the body in Judaism. Since the Hebrew Bible does not talk about the death and afterlife clearly, some average people and some scholars claim that there is nothing relevant to the hereafter. However, in this study I put the Hebrew Bible to conversation with ancient cult of the dead and Medieval Jewish philosophers Saadya Gaon and Yehuda Halevi to proof the existence of afterlife and immortality of the soul in Judaism; even though Judaism is defined as the religion of this world and present time by some Jews and described by some scholars as the religion that does not have an afterlife concept in it.

Acknowledgements

It has been a wonderful adventure pursuing my master's degree, which I could not have done without the encouragement, guidance, support, and wisdom of several people. I am heartily thankful to my advisor, Alison Schofield, whose encouragement, supervision and support from the preliminary to the concluding level enabled me to develop an understanding of the subject. I also would like to thank my committee member and graduate advisor Carl Raschke, and Sarah Pessin whose comments were always helpful.

Additionally, I would like to thank Turkish Republic Ministry of Education and my wonderful wife, Havva Irmak for their support. Their support and love lightened my way. I offer my regards and blessings to all of those who supported me in any respect during the completion of the thesis.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to those who have helped me become who I am today and without them I could have never achieve such a success. For the long nights without sleep, for caring for me while I was sick, for always believing in me when others would not, for the unconditional love, care, and support, I will forever be thankful to two women in my life, my mother, Kadriye Irmak, and my love, Havva Irmak.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction And Methodological Foundations.....	1
Methodological Foundations.....	8
Chapter Two: Biblical Account of Death, Hereafter, and the Cult of Death.....	10
The Cult of the Dead of the Ancient Israelites.....	11
The Abode of the Dead and its Inhabitants in Ancient Israel.....	14
Chapter Three: The Concept of the Soul and the World to Come in Medieval Philosophy: Saadya Gaon and Yehuda Halevi.....	21
Hereafter and the Soul in Saadya Gaon’s Philosophy.....	24
Afterlife and the Soul in Yehuda Halevi’s Philosophy.....	34
Chapter Four: Conclusion and Discussion.....	46
Bibliography.....	59

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The belief in the hereafter and the immortality of soul is one of the main principles of all Abrahamic religions. This belief has become one of the most important precepts for these religions because it has an important connection with ethics and the individual life in a society. We all know that all humankind live, die, and then their corpse will decay. For the Abrahamic religions, humankind has a part that will not decay. They offer a life beyond the grave to the people both who practice the tenets of the religion and who do not alike. Some ordinary people and some scholars claim that among three Abrahamic religions, Judaism is the religion that might be more ambiguous about the hereafter and the immortality of the soul than Christianity and Islam. It is clear that there is uncertainty about the afterlife and the fate of the soul in the world to come in Judaism among the Jews and non-Jews. The reasons that lie under this disagreement are the original textual resources, i.e. the Torah and the interpretations of them.

Through a comparative study of early Jewish notions of afterlife existences and the persistence of the self (soul) in the cult of the dead with the later philosophers' - Saadya Gaon and Yehuda Halevi-- ideas about soul and the world to come, we conclude that the reason of the uncertainty among the ordinary people, even among some scholars, about existence of life after death is caused from the original textual sources and re-interpretation of them .Despite Gaon and Halevi draw a clear picture of the belief in hereafter, there is still an ambiguity of the existence of a life after death in modern day

Judaism . In other words, by putting these two different times in conversation with one another, we are able to say that the existence of afterlife and the immortality of soul after death is a fact in the Hebrew Bible and later interpretations of it by philosophers even though the Hebrew Bible has some vague terms regarding to death and afterlife such as *Sheol*, *teraphim*, *rephaim*, *elohim*, and *nephesh* and it is whispering the existence of afterlife.

The question could be raised as to why I picked two distant eras of Judaism to study death and its beyond. My answer to the question is as follows: to study the roots of a religion is a required step to understand the religion. The formative period of early Judaism as well as the golden ages of Jewish philosophy and literature in the Medieval times are two important eras in the development of Jewish thought and therefore are worthy of study in regards to Jewish ideas of the hereafter and the concept of the soul. To study both of these distant periods is important step in understanding the reasons behind the ambiguity in hereafter and the concept of soul among the ordinary people and some scholars such as Baki Adam and Neil Gilman.

I believe that religion has the same features as a living creature. It evolves and changes its form during time. Every period brings its own problems, and religion needs to respond to all of these issues that come with time. To comprehend a concept in a religion, scholars need to reflect upon the roots of that religion. It is impossible to cover here the development of Jewish thought from antiquity to today; for that reason, I have chosen to focus in part on the early Judaic period in order to understand the Jewish concept of the afterlife and the fate of the soul. Another problem that makes it even harder to talk on the topic of death and afterlife is either the lack or ambiguity of the concept of death and

hereafter in the Torah. However, we can deal with it by the help of the studies on the extra-biblical materials, i.e. archeological findings and the folk tales and legends of Ancient Near East related to the afterlife and the situation of the soul after death in the antiquity. These findings will help us grasp the notion of afterlife and immortality of the soul in early Judaism.

In addition to this, whatever information we have about death and hereafter in the Torah will be another resource to explain the notion of the hereafter and the fate of soul in Judaism. Moreover, there is even a common opinion among some scholars like Neil Gilman that death was described as the end by the biblical authors.¹ Shawna D. Overton and Richard E. Friedman claim that belief in an afterlife existed in ancient Israel. They have strongly supported their claim by showing the existence of the cult of the dead in the antiquity.² They also said that we cannot say the Hebrew Bible is absolutely silent about death and the world to come; there is a whisper about death and afterlife in Hebrew Bible.³ The issue is to find some proofs that show the existence of the belief in the hereafter. However, when I read the verses in the Torah about the terms related to death, the life after death, and the archeological findings together, I can say that there is a belief in hereafter.

¹ Richard E. Friedman and Shawna D. Overton, "Death and Afterlife: The Biblical Silence," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity Part 4 Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection & The World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner, 36(Leiden ,NV, The Netherlands: Brill, 2000).

² ibid

³ ibid

In later times, the concept of afterlife and immortality of the soul in Judaism were developed.⁴ This change might be either a result of the communication with other cultural circles or re-reading and interpretation of the scriptures or both.⁵ The Medieval times will be the best era to look at and find the belief in hereafter and the immortality of the soul in terms of later development in Judaism. This period provides us with rich texts and ideas on soul, immortality, and the life in the world to come. With the later developments in the religion during the medieval times, the Jewish scholars and philosophers showed that belief in afterlife is one of the precepts of Moses' religion. Especially both Saadya Gaon and Yehuda Halevi address questions of life after death and its existence.

I will compare the understandings of soul, immortality, and afterlife in early Judaism and medieval Jewish philosophy. Focusing on the writings of Saadya Gaon about soul, and Halevi's *Kuzari* and his poems related to soul and death and its beyond in order to show the reasons why some Jews and non-Jews think the hereafter and the position of soul are ambiguous. The disagreement is a result of the ambiguity of the texts about hereafter and the soul and the interpretation of them by the philosophers. Since both of these philosophers composed their philosophies against the Karaites who tried to establish a Torah-based Judaism, they had rich scriptural references in their masterpieces, *Book of Beliefs and Opinion* and *the Kuzari in Defense of the Despised Faith*.⁶

⁴ Robin L Routledge, "Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament" *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 22-38.

⁵ Ibid, 23

⁶ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "Saadya Ben Joseph Gaon (882-942)", 180-184 and "Judah Halevi (1075-1141)", 88-92 in *Fifty Key Jewish Thinkers* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007).

Before questioning the idea of the soul in that era, I will examine biblical writings and extra-biblical materials related to my topic. My goal is to find answers to the following questions;

- a. How does the Hebrew Bible or the Torah explain afterlife, the soul, and the life in the hereafter?
- b. How do archeological findings help us to understand belief in the hereafter and immortality of soul in early biblical times?
- c. If we think the existence beyond the grave was defined as the immortality of the soul in some cases in the later times:
 1. What is the nature of the soul according to medieval philosophers, especially for Saadya Gaon and Yehuda Halevi?
 2. What are the origins of their ideas about soul and main differences in their philosophy about soul and hereafter?
 3. What makes these two philosophers unique in terms of my subject topic?

Many people within many religious contexts wonder where soul comes from and its relationship to the physical body. Further, religions, especially Western religions, tend to devote much theological speculation to the questions of where the soul goes after death and how it will be judged in the hereafter. Although these questions are impossible to fully expound upon, I will examine how some Jews have grappled with these questions both through their early practices and sacred texts as well as through the written works of later philosophers.

The ambiguity regarding to death and afterlife in Judaism derives from the Torah. The notion of afterlife and the position of soul in the world to come are not very clear in the Torah. Moreover, some current scholars such as Baki Adam claim that there is nothing about the hereafter in Torah. He goes further and says because of the absence of the concept of the immortality of soul in Torah, some Jews do not believe in hereafter.⁷ However, by studying the cult of the dead in antiquity, the writing of these Jewish philosophers, Gaon and Halevi, are not ambiguous about the afterlife and its existence, and these three are the clear refutations to the assumptions mentioned above relevant the ambiguity or lack of existence of afterlife and presence of the soul after death.

There are relatively few thorough studies of the role of afterlife in Judaism. The studies related to death and life after death is the sub-field of thanatology (study of death).⁸ Thanatology as an interdisciplinary study is also a newer discipline which has been studied since 1960s.⁹ We do not exactly know the reasons why scholars did not pay much attention on the death and life after death. It might be the result of positivism or the nature of death. Humankind cannot accept being mortal, and we all have fear of death. As Sigmund Freud said in his book *Civilization, Society and Religion* no one accepts his or her own mortality and everyone believes him or herself as the immortal one.¹⁰ Death

⁷Baki Adam, "Yahudilik" in *Yasayan Dunya Dinleri*, ed. Sinasi Erdem, 237 (Ankara, Turkey: DIB Yayinlari, 2007).

⁸ Simcha P. Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1994), 35.

⁹ *Ibid*, 35

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Ölüme Yönelik Tutumumuz", in *Uygarlık, Din ve Toplum*, trans. Selçuk Budak (Ankara: Turkey, Öteki Yayınevi, 1995). 75.

awakes some fear and unhappiness for every single individual. There is a saying in Turkish “the face of death is cold”; this means death does make people unhappy. We all know that we have a tendency to avoid talking about the subjects that do not give us happiness. Death is one of those concepts that do not give pleasure to humankind. Hayati Hokelekli claims that the fear of death is the major fear that produced all the fears that human beings have.¹¹ I think because of these psychological reasons that are derived from the nature of death, there may not be much study on death.

On the other hand, nowadays the academic interest on death is increasing, as Simcha P. Raphael claims that there are more than 200,000 courses that being annually taught about death and thanatology in today’s USA.¹² Increasing the number of courses about death might cause people to realize the role of death within the attribution of life. All those courses focus on the different dimensions of death. I realized that there are small amounts of studies that focus on life after death and the immortal part of the body as I was doing research. There are lots of writings on medieval philosophy, whereas only a few of them are related to death and afterlife.

Raphael wrote a book entitled as *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, as a ‘book of dead’ for Jewish people. She did a comprehensive job to compile the entire Jewish views of afterlife starting from the beginning of Judaism to modern times. However, she did not focus on the reasons of the ambiguity about the belief in the hereafter and the position of soul, even though she is aware of that ambiguity in belief of Jews in the hereafter. There

¹¹ Hayati Hokelekli, “Dini Hayatin Butunlugu Acisindan Ahiret İnancin Psikolojik Temelleri”, <http://www.kelam.org/toplantilar/2007/hhokelekli.doc>

¹² Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 35

is also not much literature for the part of the hereafter and the immortality of soul in the Bible in her study. My aim is to complete these findings and to find out the reasons for the ambiguity in the belief in hereafter and the position of the soul.

There is also another study which was edited by Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner. They entitled this book *Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection and the World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity*, which is the fourth volume of Judaism in Late Antiquity series. This book is really efficient in grasping the notion of death and afterlife in different texts that were written during different times of antiquity. However, there is no article about the philosophical approach to death and life-after death in their edited book. Since this study was basically done for a limited time, it might be good to understand the death and afterlife for that period. We should also do some research on later development in the religion to comprehend the concept of death and afterlife. It is obvious that ambiguity about life after death is due to the nature of the texts and different interpretation of these texts.

Methodological Foundations

To examine the complexities and ambiguity in the Jewish beliefs in the hereafter and the immortality of the soul, I will use the intertextuality method and comparative method. I think the intertextuality method of reading is going to be the best way to explore the juxtaposition of the biblical texts within themselves. It is also important to find the parallelism in the biblical writings and philosophical ones. As we know, intertextuality is the method that gives the author a chance to find the similarities and

differences of the texts and events.¹³ I will find out the existence of the belief in hereafter in the Bible; in addition to this, I will try to find the answer to how the medieval Jewish philosophers, Saadya put the belief in hereafter in the credo of the Judaism. How Yehuda Halevi understood the concept of soul and its fate after death although there is not clear evidences about that belief in Torah. Because they both used the Torah as the primary source to present their opinions, the intertextuality method gives me opportunity to read both the Torah and both of these philosophers' books together since they both based their arguments on the textual sources. Even though I realized that there is a clear impact of rabbinical writings on their ideas, still they are good sources to read the Torah within their ideas to grasp the notion of afterlife and the concept of soul. Saadya especially, used many verses from the Torah to explain the nature and fate of soul, reward and punishment after death.

In addition to intertextuality method, the comparative method will be used to figure out the connection between biblical and extra-biblical materials.¹⁴ I have a plan to look at the cult of death in archeological findings and the Torah. I will also examine how the cult of death in ancient Israel influences Biblical writers and what is the share of it in Jewish understanding of life after death and the position of soul. Furthermore, I will examine how these cultic practices are in service of Biblical texts.

¹³ G.R. O'day, "Intertextuality" Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation, ed. John H. Hayes 546-548 (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Wayne T. Pitard, "Tombs and Offerings: Archeological Data and Comparative Methodology in *the Study of Death in Israel*" in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. Barry M.Gittlen 145-168(Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF DEATH, HEREAFTER, AND THE CULT OF DEATH

Brain B. Schmidt claims that the question of death and afterlife in antiquity during the “reconstruction of the religious traditions of ancient Mediterranean West Asian cultures or the Levant” has been discussed more than any other issues.¹⁵ Although scholars can talk about the belief in the hereafter in the Ancient Near East easily, it is hard to say the same thing about Ancient Israel. The notion of death and life after death either in Egypt or in Mesopotamia can be seen in their burial styles and their folk tales. The remnants in the Egyptian pyramids and the writings in Egyptian literature, as well as the folk tales in the Mesopotamian legends about death are very clear proofs of the belief in the hereafter, and they give some ideas of what the Ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians believed about death.¹⁶ However, the situation of Ancient Israel is not very clear about death and life after death. Although some Ugaritic texts and burial practices of the Ancient Canaanites give us some clues about death and the fate of the

¹⁵ Brain B. Schmidt “Memory as Immortality: Countering the Dreaded “Death After Death” in *Ancient Israelite Society*,” in *Judaism in Late Antiquity Part 4 Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection & The World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner, 87-100(Leiden, NV, The Netherlands: Brill, 2000).

¹⁶ Leonardo H. Lesko, “Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egyptian Thought” in *Civilization of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson, Vol. III (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1995).

dead, they still are not enough to understand the whole concept of death and the life beyond the grave.¹⁷ To figure out the existence of the belief in hereafter in early Judaism, I will look at the cult of the dead and abode of the dead in both archeological and biblical sources.

It is a common thought that the Hebrew Bible is uncertain about life after death even if there are some unquestionable references to it.¹⁸ Friedman and Overton tell that the Jews of antiquity were well aware of death.¹⁹ However, their interest in the fate of the dead is very little when we look only to the Hebrew Bible. The authors of the Bible represent the official religion; however, we see more clearly what the average Israelite believed by the traces left behind of folk religion, specifically their burial practices related to the fate of the corpse.

The Cult of the Dead of the Ancient Israelites

Studying the remains of the Israelite, cult of the dead can illuminate what they believed about the hereafter. To comprehend the cult of the death, archeological findings will guide us to have a better understanding of the terms about afterlife in the Torah. While I am reading Scriptures, the archeological findings will be a useful tool to understand them. They will help me to illuminate the ambiguous passages in the Torah about the other worldly realm of dead. Whatever was found by archeologists might be a helpful source to understand the mortuary practices in Ancient Israel. Biblical references

¹⁷ Schmidt, *Memory as Immortality*, 91

¹⁸ Routledge, *Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament*, 23-38, and Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 35

¹⁹ Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 35

to death and the hereafter might give us some sufficient result in terms of our subject if we read the archeological findings and biblical texts together.

Tombs installations are the best proofs of archeological excavations in terms of our subject. The tomb burial styles are the major clues that direct us to grasp the notion of cult of the death.²⁰ There are two major tomb burial styles in ancient Judah. They are bench tombs and cave tombs.²¹ In the cave tomb, the deceased body with his or her dress and jewelry was laid in the middle of the tomb; there are also some mortuary goods around the corpse.²² The deceased body in the bench tomb was also installed in the same way as the ones in the cave tombs.²³ Friedman and Overton quoted a passage from R.E Cooley's article *Gathered to His People: A Study of a Dothan Family Tomb*. I will quote the same passage to show the tomb installation supports the existence of a cult of death and their belief in the existence of a kind of life after death.

An auxiliary opening or circular window was positioned on the front side directly above one of the chamber niches. Outside the chamber and below the opening two large storage jars had been placed. Each jar contained a dipper juglet for the dead to receive the contents... Such provisions give sufficient evidence for the concern of the **living to provide the dead with refreshing drinks**. It also possible that Dothan was used for libations... At Dothan water would be poured into the chamber through the window opening and then the vessels placed along the stone retaining wall of the shaft. This would account for the large number of vessels found outside the chamber. Few Palestinian sites have yielded such apparatus to

²⁰ Elizabeth Bloch- Smith, "The Cult of the Dead in Judah: Interpreting the Material Remains" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111/2 (1992): 213-224

²¹ Ibid, 217

²² Ibid, 214-218

²³ R.E. Cooley, "Gathered to His People: A Study of Dothan Family Tomb" in *the Living and Active Word of God*, ed. Morris Inch and Ronald Youngbloods (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraus, 1983) 50-51.

supply water for the thirst of the dead. The ritual purpose of these devices is clearly evident.

The materials found in the excavations suggest to us that the living people made a new life ready for their dead relatives. This kind of archeological excavation will be helpful to figure out the cult of the death in ancient Israelites' life. The goods in the tombs demonstrate us that there is a belief in hereafter among the ordinary people. Furthermore, Elizabeth Bloch-Smith counts pottery, tools, jewelry, household items, and personal items among the things that have been found in the excavations in Judah.²⁴ In addition to these items, something related to nourishment were also found in the archeological excavations. They support the idea that there was a belief that the corpse had a life after death. She focuses also on some ceramic vessels and jewelries as the two most common objects to be found at the burial sites. She explains the ceramic vessels were related to the need for the nourishment of the dead people.²⁵ Since the dead people need protection, the jewelry was used to protect, like an amulet, from the devils that might harm them.²⁶ There are also some other tools such as a candle in the grave of ancient people that remind us the dead people have a daily life in the grave. Moreover, the presence of female figurines in the tombs was explained as a symbol of ongoing relationship of the dead and living ones.²⁷

In ancient Israel, the dead ancestors also had the power over the life of the living relatives. Because of their power, they were exalted by the people of their own

²⁴ Bloch-Smith, *The Cult of Dead*, 214-218

²⁵ Ibid, 218

²⁶ Ibid, 220-222

²⁷ Ibid, 218, 219

community.²⁸ Bloch-Smith thinks the dead have an ability to know the future. The necromancy is the practice to get the information about the future of the living people. To appease the dead relatives' spirit, ancient people were offering some foods, libations, and incense.²⁹ The prohibition in Deuteronomy 26:14 was interpreted by the scholars who studied the ancient Israelites' cult of death as the existence of necromancy in Ancient Israelite society. The exaltation of dead relatives was discouraged when monotheist Yahwistic Judaism rose to prominence.³⁰ The studies on the cult of death showed us there is an obvious cult of the death in ancient folk religion; however the official religion tries to oppress the cult of the dead among the ordinary people.

The Abode of the Dead and its Inhabitants in Ancient Israel

To understand the realm of the dead in antiquity and Bible, we need to look at what we have in writings. For this aim, it might be helpful to think about the terms related to death and mortuary practices in the Hebrew Bible. The terms that were explained and interpreted by the scholars about death and the destiny of the corpse are '*Sheol, rephaim, teraphim, elohim, nephesh*.

There are three realms in the Judaic worldview. The first realm is the place in which the God YHWH dwelt, the second one is the humanly realm, and the last one is the realm for the dead, Sheol.³¹ Sheol is the term that had been used many times by the biblical authors to refer to the existence of a life after death. We can see this term sixty-

²⁸ Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 40

²⁹ Bloch-Smith, *The Cult of Dead*, 213-224

³⁰ Ibid, 220-224, and Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 40-56.

³¹ Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 53

five times in the Hebrew Bible.³² The terms have been interpreted by different scholars in different ways due to different etymological approaches to Sheol. There is no consensus about the root of the Sheol. While some think it derives from Akkadian *su'alu* which means underworld, some consider *s'h* as the root of the Sheol which means nothingness.³³ Albright believes that Sheol is the place of decision because it stems from *sa'alu* that means to ask.³⁴ From this root of Sheol, it might be the place of interrogation. The different meanings of the word might show us the different understandings of the term of Sheol throughout the history. Sheol used to be a neutral term that means neither a good place nor a bad place deep in the ground.³⁵ Sheol also was seen the subterranean realm for the dead people.³⁶ In Genesis 42:38, Jacob says if something bad happens to Benjamin, he would be sent to the Sheol. This verse demonstrates that Jacob tried to indicate he would die if something wrong occurred to his son.³⁷ After death every single man goes straight to the realm of Sheol; he or she is not in the realm of humans anymore. All these explanations about Sheol imply that it might be grave that everyone goes to after dying. Brian Schmidt also thinks the netherworld, Sheol, overlaps in its boundaries with the grave.³⁸ He added also the grave might be the gate for Sheol. Since there is no future for the dead beyond the grave, the etymological approach to Sheol as nothingness

³² Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 41

³³ Ibid, 41

³⁴ Ibid, 41

³⁵ Ibid, 55 and Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 51-57

³⁶ Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 52-53

³⁷ Genesis: 42:38

³⁸ Schmidt, *Memory as Immortality*, 89

also might be correct. However, the existence of the cult of the dead and later developments in the concept of afterlife proved that Sheol was not the place for nothingness. Later, Sheol was described in a negative way. It became a place in which only the wicked people would be punished. It later is turned into a place known as hell, as Christianity and Islam describe. It is a place of interrogation about whatever the dead did in the humanly realm.

The second term that is related to the underground domain of the dead is *rephaim*. The term *rephaim* is used to define the settlers of the netherworld.³⁹ It is another enigmatic term on which scholars do not share consensus.⁴⁰ Since we read this term in different contexts with different meanings, it is hard to grasp the exact meaning of it. The same term with different interpretations make the term vaguer than we thought. In some texts, it is the native people of Canaan, and in some other places, it refers to the dead who have a life underground.⁴¹ We can see this term in different texts in the Hebrew Bible. For example, in Isa.14:9 and 26:14, it is the word that applies to the residents of the netherworld. In Genesis 14:5 and in some other text it is used as the natives of Canaan.⁴² It might also be understood by help of the Ugaritic text and Hebrew word *rapa'*. In Ugaritic texts, there is a god whose name is *Rp'u*. He is associated with healing and fertility. The Hebrew word *rapa'* means to heal⁴³; if there was an ancestors' cult in

³⁹ Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 42

⁴⁰ Ibid, 40-55

⁴¹ Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 42

⁴² Ibid,42

⁴³ Ibid,42

ancient Hebrew world, rephaim might be someone from whom the living wants to ask for help to get healing from sickness.⁴⁴ This enigmatic word is an example of how they disagree with the belief in the hereafter and the characteristics of the dwellers of the other realm more uncertain all these different etymological approaches.

Another term related to realm of the dead is *teraphim*. Harry A. Hoffner claims that the term *teraphim* was derived from the Hittite word 'tarpis', which means the spirit.⁴⁵ *Teraphim* were thought of as ancestral images that might be used as an instrument for divination, communicating with the dead ancestors. It might be “the physical representation of the household gods.”⁴⁶ The best example about the *teraphim* in the Bible is when the daughter of Saul, Michal put the *teraphim* on the bed to help him to escape from her father.⁴⁷ Another place that *teraphim* are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible is where the daughter of Laban, Rachel, stole her father’s *teraphim* and hid it among the camel’s furniture.⁴⁸ As we have seen in these two examples, *teraphim* are some kind of images that might be as big as a human statue or as small as a bibelot. If we assume that *teraphim* were the instruments to communicate with the realm of the dead, it might be a proof of the existence of the life after death in antiquity.

⁴⁴ Ibid,42

⁴⁵ Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., “Hittite tarpis and Hebrew Teraphim,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 27 (1968) 61-68

⁴⁶ Herbert C. Brichto “Kin, Cult, and Afterlife- A Biblical Complex ,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973), 9

⁴⁷ I Samuel 19: 13

⁴⁸Genesis 31:19

The fourth term that might be useful to know for a better understanding of our subject is *elohim*. Brichto interprets the word *elohim* as the same meaning of *teraphim*, the spirits of dead ancestor rather than the gods.⁴⁹ Even though it is commonly translated as gods, there are also a few references that refer to *elohim* as the spirit of dead ancestor. The scholars interpreted *elohim* in Samuel 28:13 and Isaiah 8:19-21 and in some other places as the spirits of the dead ancestors.⁵⁰ In Samuel 28, when Saul asked the witch of Endor to help him about his consultation with the prophet Samuel, she described the one who came from the underworld with the word *elohim*. Even though it is translated in many places as a ‘divine being’, the coming one was the spirit of Samuel. It might be more proper to prefer ‘spirit’ rather than ‘divine being’ because the one being called was the spirit of Samuel, not god himself. Some scholars like Brian B. Schmidt think *elohim* should not be translated as the spirit of the ancestor.⁵¹ Schmidt believes in Mesopotamian necromantic traditions, there were two different otherworldly beings during the necromancy. The one was the chthonic god and the second one was the spirit of the dead.⁵² He has translated the same verse as follows:⁵³

The king said to her (the witch of Endor), ‘be not afraid, what do you see?’ And the woman said to Saul, ‘I see chthonic gods [*elohim*] coming up from the earth’. Then he said to her, ‘(Now) what you have perceived?’ And she said to him, ‘an old / upright man coming up from the earth and he is wrapped in a robe (=Samuel).

⁴⁹ Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 43

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 43

⁵¹ Schmidt, *Memory as Immortality*, 90

⁵² *Ibid*, 90.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 90.

However, in some other translations such as the New Revised Standard Version, Saul was asking what she saw, and then he asked what his appearance was.⁵⁴ From those translations, the equation of *elohim* and the spirits of the dead looks like a correct assumption. The first person that the witch of Endor saw was the same person as the second one who had been described as the wrapped one in a robe because when we read the verse correctly Saul wanted to learn ‘his’ appearance. Then, she described Samuel’s appearance to him. When we also think the verse in Isaiah, which is prohibiting communicating with the dead, shows us *elohim* is the term that refers the dead ancestors rather than gods. Schmidt seems incorrect in his claim the two beings in necromancy are two different otherworld beings.

The terms that have been examined so far are related to death and the role of the dead in the afterlife. These terms demonstrate us the enigmatic terms in the Hebrew Bible and ancient usage of these terms caused to have a harder understanding of belief in the hereafter. The next term I will discuss is *nephesh*, which is the only term that tells something about the soul. *Nephesh* means breath, vital energy, life force or spirit in Hebrew.⁵⁵ Raphael says that death usually was not described as a complete annihilation or non-existence; it is more a situation of decreasing the energy humans have.⁵⁶ Either a living man or a dead one can be called by the word *nepfesh*. While the living one defined as ‘*nephesh hayyah*’ (Gen.2:7), the dead individual becomes a ‘*nephesh met*’ (Lev.

⁵⁴ 1 Samuel 28:13-14 in *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D.Coogan. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.

⁵⁵ Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 56.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 56.

21:11; Num. 6:6).⁵⁷ Soul and body are not two separate entities; they both are in the body and unified when God created the body.⁵⁸ For Raphael, while the living ones live their life in the world, the ones whose earthly life is terminated live in the family tomb in a ‘weakened and faded condition’.⁵⁹ Even though it is difficult to translate the word *nephesh* as the soul according to Greek philosophy and Christian and Islamic theology, it still partly resembles the soul concept in Greek philosophy and Christian and Islamic theology in how it refers to existence beyond the grave and becoming the vital energy within *nephesh hayyah*. More or less either dead or alive, everyone carries a piece of *nephesh* within the body. The connectivity of soul and body is one of the main characters of the soul concept in Judaism, especially in the philosophy of Saadya Gaon.

All we have seen in this chapter, the existence of the cult of dead in the archeological findings and the terms about the abode of dead after life and the dwellers of the abode of dead in Biblical sources and extra-biblical material show us the existence of a concept of afterlife in early Jewish life.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 56.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 57.

**CHAPTER THREE: THE CONCEPT OF THE SOUL AND THE WORLD TO
COME IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY: SAADYA GAON AND YEHUDA
HALEVI**

Soul, death and the fate of the soul after death are the ambiguous concepts in Judaism and Jewish philosophy if we compare to other topics such as the importance of Holy Land, necessity of mitzvot in the religion. This ambiguity is caused either from the Bible or the interpretation of the tradition. However, this ambiguity was much less in the Middle Ages compared to other times. To grasp the notion of soul and life after death in Jewish philosophy, I will focus on medieval Jewish philosophy.

I will look at two select, but important, philosophers from the Medieval Ages: Saadya Ben Joseph Gaon Al Fayyumi (882-942) and Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141). I chose these two scholars because of some specific reasons. First of all, both of them were great scholars of their time. Saadya is one of the most important philosophers of Jewish philosophy of religion; he was perhaps the first one to write systematically on the philosophical topics of the androcentric approach to the place of man and the essence of soul in Jewish Philosophy.⁶⁰ He lived at the end of 9th and early 10th centuries. Due to his living at the earlier period of the medieval times, studying Saadya gives one a chance to examine the early understanding of Middle Ages' concept of soul, death and its beyond.

⁶⁰ Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinion* (11th century) trans. Samuel Rosenblatt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976).

Saadya used both Biblical sources and reason to point out the questions in Jewish society of his time about the discussed points in their belief.⁶¹ His knowledge spectrum was very wide. He studied exegesis of the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar, and philosophy. He based his philosophy on Biblical references and Greek Philosophy which was transferred to Middle Eastern academic environment through the translation works of Muslims.⁶² His masterpiece, *Book of Doctrine and Beliefs*, will be my guide to comprehend his ideas about the soul, death and hereafter. This book was composed of ten chapters, six of which were related to the subjects about soul, death, reward and punishment after death and in this world, and resurrection and the redemption of Israel. I think there is a clear belief in the hereafter and an obvious concept of soul in Medieval Jewish philosophy, especially in the philosophy of Saadya.

Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141) is another important philosopher and religious scholar of Judaism for understanding death, soul and the life beyond the grave in Medieval Jewish philosophy and theology. He was born in 1075 in Tudela or Toledo, Spain, where Judaism experienced its Golden Age, and he died in 1141. To understand the philosophy of Yehuda Halevi, his masterpiece *The Kuzari* and his poems will be the best sources to study. *The Kuzari* was written by him in 1140. When we think his book was composed a year before he died, *the Kuzari* will be the most useful source to grasp his mature ideas about Jewish belief system. The great mastery of his philosophy, *The Kuzari* became a handbook for Jews who wanted to learn about Judaism in his day and

⁶¹ Norman Lamn, "Man's Position in the Universe. A Comparative Study of the Views of Saadia Gaon and Maimonides," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series 55/3(January 1965), 208-234.

⁶² Dan Cohn- Sherbok, *Saadiyah Ben Joseph Gaon*, 180-181.

beyond. In his sixty-six year life-span, he also composed many poems; eight hundred of them are known by us. Besides being a famous rabbi, philosopher and poet, he was a physician in Toledo.⁶³ He was a man of his time and tried to deal with the problems of his time. He believed that the true religion, Judaism, was despised by Greek philosophy and the dominant culture of his time. Yehuda Halevi criticized Greek philosophy and the religious understanding that took shape around that philosophy.⁶⁴ However, while he was criticizing it, he used a philosophical approach to establish his ideas. Even though he was against the Jewish-Arabic synthesis of Middle Ages,⁶⁵ he wrote his book *The Kuzari in Defense of the Despised Faith* in Arabic to support the superiority of scripture over philosophical thought and highness of prophets to the philosophers. The book is mainly a conversation between the Khazar king who was seeking to the true religion to convert and before deciding to convert to Judaism, his wants to know more about the religion, and the Rabbi who aimed to tell him the only true religion of God was Judaism and its precepts. As we see from the title of the book, it is a defense of Judaism against the other religions and the movements within the religion such as Karaism. The king was asking the Rabbi about controversial topics and was trying to give the most sufficient answer to his questions by using scripture and the writings of Judaism. As I have mentioned before,

⁶³ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judah Halevi*, 88-92. The introduction of the Kuzari which was written by N Daniel Korobkin can also provide some information about his life. (Halevi, the Kuzari, Introduction)

⁶⁴ Isaak Heinemann, "Introduction to Kuzari" in 3 Jewish Philosophers, ed. Hans Lewy, Alexander Altmann and Isaak Heinemann, 331-347(New Milford, CT: The Toby Press,2006).

⁶⁵ Aaron W. Hughes, "Halevi, Judah" in Jewish Philosophy A-Z ed. Oliver Leaman (New York: NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

the belief in hereafter or the life beyond the grave was one of the most discussed topics in Judaism in Medieval times by Jewish philosophers, so, understandably, the Khazar king was asking the questions about the afterlife and the existence after death.⁶⁶ These parts will be the best pieces to grasp the notion of hereafter in Halevi's understanding. He talked in a different section of his book about death and the afterlife.

I have chosen Saadia and Halevi because they both established their approaches regarding to death and afterlife on philosophy and scripture, even though Halevi disagrees with the methodologies and ideas of the philosophers. After a short introduction, it will be good to study their opinions in detail.

Hereafter and the Soul in Saadya Gaon's Philosophy

Saadya is methodologically nuanced when he proposes a philosophical argument. In his methodology, first he shows every possible explanation or disagreement about a problem. Then, he presents his own opinion about the topic that he discusses.⁶⁷ He follows the same methodology when he discusses the nature of the soul and its fate after death. He also uses Scripture and the intellectual method to develop and prove his own ideas. He mentions seven arguments from his time about the nature of the soul. He thinks all of these arguments are the offspring of the perplexed mind in some way.⁶⁸

The first argument is one in which he accepts the soul as one of the accidents. Some scholars consider the soul as one of the accidents of body, since the soul cannot be

⁶⁶ Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, *the Kuzari in Defense of Despised Faith* (12th Century), trans. N. Daniel Korobkin (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997), 46.

⁶⁷ Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinion*; in the beginning of every treatise, he mentions this methodology.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 236-237

seen, and the only thing we have seen is the action of it. He says some thinkers say the soul is the perfection of natural body, the self moving accident, composition of natures, or the coordination of the senses.⁶⁹ He does not accept any of these descriptions for the soul. He mentions several reasons when he rejects the accidental character of the soul. For him, the soul is the whole source of wisdom and intelligence; accidental phenomenon cannot be the source of wisdom and intelligence.⁷⁰ He suggests to the reader that since the soul is the substance, it might be affected by some other accidents. It is obvious that the soul is affected by some accidents, since the soul consists of some contrary qualities together in it. According to Aristotle, “a substance can be the carrier of two contrary qualities.” Saadya uses this doctrine to show the soul is a substance, not an accident.⁷¹

The second and third notions were that soul consists of air or fire.⁷² For him, these two theories are both absurd. To disprove these two theories, he relies on his experiences.⁷³ The fourth theory that Saadya does not accept is the dualistic approach about the nature of soul. According to the theory the soul is composed of two parts, one rational and the other part is irrational. There is absolutely no connection between the rational and irrational part of it. While the rational part is not perishable, the irrational part is perishable. The irrational part is the animal soul and the rational part the part existed from eternity. In Gaon’s theory, only the eternal one is God. He does not accept

⁶⁹ Ibid, 237

⁷⁰ Ibid, 237

⁷¹ Ibid, 237

⁷² Ibid, 237

⁷³ Ibid, 238

the idea of the eternity of the soul. The animal character of the soul is an obstacle to use the sensual perception of the soul. Therefore, this theory is also invalid according to Saadya.⁷⁴ Some of the scholars of his time claimed that the soul consists of two kinds of air. One of them is the being within the body, but the other one is the thing coming from without body. The observation of respiration led those scholars to think in this way. However, Saadya thinks the aim of breathing is to cool the warmth of the hearth where soul seats in.⁷⁵

Another theory, which was rejected by Saadya, was developed by his Karaite opponent Anan ben David who was the founder of Karaism in the 8th century. According to Anan, the soul should be identified with blood. Even though Anan references the Bible to show the true nature of the soul, he misuses the biblical reference. Anan used Deuteronomy 12:23 which says “for the blood is the soul.” Saadya says the Torah also say that “for the soul (life) of flesh is in blood; and I have given it to you for making the atonement.”⁷⁶ The life is translated as the soul by Saadya and Anan. However, for Saadya “the blood is the seat and the centre of the soul.”⁷⁷ Saadya was also claiming Anan did not realize the nuances of the language. Sometimes the Torah refers to a part of something but it means something else from its literal meaning. For example, heart used to imply wisdom since it is the seat of the wisdom instead of a vital organ of

⁷⁴ Ibid, 237-238.

⁷⁵ Ibid 237

⁷⁶ Lev. 17: 11

⁷⁷ Ibid, 238-239

humankind.⁷⁸ In this case, because the blood refers the place in which the soul resides, the soul cannot be the same thing as blood. Anan made a mistake by taking the literal meaning of the verse.⁷⁹

The last theory, which was developed and argued by Saadya, is the theory about the nature of the soul. According to Saadya, the knowledge of the existence of the soul is an inferential knowledge since we see the functions of the soul, not the actual form of it.⁸⁰

Saadya has a non-dualistic approach about nature of the soul. The soul and body were created at the same time by God.⁸¹ Saadya Gaon explains the nature of the soul by using some biblical references. According to him, when God created the man, He also created the soul in the heart of the man. He refers to Zechariah chapter 12 verse 1; “the God formed the spirit of man within him.” In addition to this, God set a limited time for the existence of soul and body. They will be separate for a while from each others. Then when the number of the soul that is decided by the God is completed, they will be reunited.⁸²

While it looks like he has a dogmatic approach to explain the nature of the soul due to the usage of many verses from the Hebrew Bible, but he also uses reason to figure out the nature of soul.⁸³ He claims that he derives his opinion from two sources: pure

⁷⁸ Ibid, 238-39

⁷⁹ Ibid, 239

⁸⁰ Ibid, 239-245

⁸¹ Ibid, 241-242

⁸² Ibid, 249-250.

⁸³ Ibid, 242

reason and Scripture.⁸⁴ He observed the traces and the function of the soul on the body. After the departing of the soul from the body, it loses every qualities of it.⁸⁵ The functions and the wisdom of the soul that have an impact on the terrestrial body show us ‘the soul is a substance even finer, clearer, purer, and simpler than any of the celestial spheres.’⁸⁶ His second piece of evidence for the pure nature of the soul comes from the Scripture. Daniel 12:3 says “the wise shine as the brightness of firmament.” The righteous soul will have a refined purity than the heavenly creatures do.⁸⁷ The true nature of the soul can be understood by the analogy of celestial spheres. He claims that the soul is more refined than the celestial spheres.⁸⁸ He says the body loses everything that he has after departing from the body. That show us the soul is not from the same material as the earthy body.⁸⁹ He thinks the soul needs body to perform its acts; that is how three faculties of the soul can manifest themselves.⁹⁰ Saadya makes a classification of the soul as Plato does. He says the soul has the faculties of discernment, appetite, and courage. To indicate different faculties of soul, the Hebrew language has three different words. These are: *nephesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*. He tried to explain each term with a verse from the

⁸⁴ Ibid,242

⁸⁵Ibid, 243

⁸⁶ Ibid,243

⁸⁷ Ibid, 243

⁸⁸ Ibid, 242

⁸⁹ Ibid, 242-243

⁹⁰ Ibid, 243

Hebrew Bible. I will try to give his classification of the soul's faculties and the verses in a chart to make it understand easier; ⁹¹

Nephesh: Faculty of Appetite ----- ‘Because thy soul (*nefesh*) desireth’ (Deut. 12:20); ‘And his soul made to abhor dainty food’ (Job 33:20)

Ruah: Faculty of Courage----- ‘Be not hasty in thy spirit (*ruah*) to be angry’ (Eccl.7:9); ‘A fool spendeth all his spirit’ (Prov.39:11)

Neshamah: Faculty of Discernment ----- ‘And the breath (*neshamah*) of the Almighty giveth them understanding’ (Job 32:8); ‘Whose breath came forth from thee’ (Job 26:4).”

All these faculties are within soul are not separate entities; all function in the same and one soul.⁹² The soul has an invisible nature; and so human beings cannot perceive it. For him the soul is seated in the heart of the man which is the middle of the body.⁹³ For him the man is the central of the universe and the heart which has the soul in it is the central point of the body.⁹⁴

The belief in afterlife is a necessity according to him. God created humankind, and he created everything else for the benefit of humans. The real happiness, joy and pleasure will be in another abode after death. The world cannot be the ultimate goal for the individuals due to it includes opposite thing in it at the same time. When mankind realized they were created for a better world, to live in this world would not be something natural to the soul.⁹⁵ He mentions another reason for the necessity of belief in world to

⁹¹ Ibid, 243-244

⁹² Ibid, 244-245

⁹³ Ibid,244

⁹⁴ Ibid,244

⁹⁵ Ibid, 324

come. He suggests that mankind need to get their rewards because of whatever they have done in this world. In this realm, it is almost impossible to have justice among the people.⁹⁶ Due to these reasons, existence of world to come is a requirement to distinguish the righteous people from the wicked ones.

Saadya believes in existence of the immortal soul after death. He disagrees with the people who say Judaism does not have a concept of life after death and that the Hebrew Bible is silent about the world to come. He does not accept the comment that the Torah mainly talks about the reward and punishment in this life more than other worldly reward and punishment.⁹⁷ For him there are two reasons why the Torah talks about the world to come, the reward and the punishment explicitly: the first reason is that God lets the people figure out the existence of the reward and punishment in the future life by using reasoning and the second reason is the “habit of prophecy” which mainly make people think about the closer aim than the far goals.⁹⁸ The prophecy is the experience that the living ones can do in this world; it also makes individual close to God. It is a fact that humans have a tendency to head towards to the closer one. The reward in the world to come is a far goal, but becoming closer through prophecy is a closer way for humans. That is why Saadya mentioned the habit of prophecy as a second reason for the uncertainty of belief in the hereafter.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 325-326

⁹⁷ Ibid, 327

⁹⁸ Ibid, 327-330

Saadya classified the passages in the Hebrew Bible under seven categories to show the existence of reward in the future life more than in present life.⁹⁹ He mostly uses many verses from the later writings of the Hebrew Bible. If we look at his categories briefly, we can see that the first passages are the ones related to life and death. The contradictory situations in our life will be clarified in the future world. The verses has been referenced in the first group refer the existence of the hereafter.¹⁰⁰ In the second section he essentially talks about the verses that tell that God will distinguish the right-doers and wrong-doers.¹⁰¹ The third section tells that God records everything done by humans.¹⁰² The forth category is the verses that talks about how God will judge humans after death.¹⁰³ The fifth one is that God will judge humans according to their doings in the world. God will be righteous in his way while he will be judging the human.¹⁰⁴ The sixth section in his categories is the passages that announce that there will be a day of God in

⁹⁹ Ibid, 330

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 330-331; He quoted the verses such as Ezek.18:20 Prov. 15:24, 8:35-36, 7:27, 11:19, and Ps.16:11. He interpreted all of these verses as an indication to life after death.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 331; Prov.10:7, Deut.6:25, Isa. 58:8 are some of the verses he quoted.

¹⁰²Ibid, 331; Ex.32:32, Isa. 65:56 are some verses that are discussed to show God records every deeds that human does.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 331-332; He refered verses such as Gen.4:7, and Eccl.3:7 to show God will judge according to merits and demits of human in this world.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 332; Deut. 32:4, Ps.145:17, Ps.9:8-9 are some pieces that demonstrate God will be justice in His Judgement to humans.

the future.¹⁰⁵ The last section of the passages that discuss the existence of the reward in the future life is the verses about the exclusion of the bad from the reward, and gaining the good as a reward in the world to come.¹⁰⁶ For Saadya the body and soul will be everlasting in the future life. The ones who had a good life will be rewarded with light, and the one who commits bad acts will be punished with the fire.¹⁰⁷ He says *Gan Eden* will be the reward for the good people and *Gehinnom* will be the punishment for the people who were the wrong-doers in their earthly life.¹⁰⁸

The fate of the soul after departing from the body is based on what the tradition says as it has been shown in the categorization of the verses in the Hebrew Bible regarding the existence of afterlife. Saadya explains it by saying that the angel who would be sent by God to separate soul and body, the *nephesh* (the breath of life), departs from the body during death. He supports his idea from I Chronicles 21:16. The verse describes the angel of death who was standing between earth and heaven, holding a sword in his hand.¹⁰⁹ The separation of soul and body is the first step to the life after death. After separation the body goes to grave. The grave is the second stage of life after death. Saadia was also discussing about the life in the grave after death. Saadia believes that the soul has been tortured after it departed from the body. Seeing decomposition of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 332; He gives some verses Zephaniah to show there will be a day of God. Zephaniah is the book that discusses the oracles that will happen in the future.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 333; Deut. 5:26, Ps. 31:20 and Eccles. 8:12-1 are the verses that have been quoted by Saadya to prove the reward will be called good and the wicked ones will not have the 'good'.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 338

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 333-341

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 255

the body will bother the soul as the man whose house is burnt in front of his eyes. This suffering can be more or less according to his or her actions in the world. The soul and body will be separate for a temporary time. After God created all souls that he decided, the soul and body will be together.¹¹⁰

According to Saadya, the souls will be stored by God until the Day of Judgment. The storage place for pure souls will be above and for the impure souls, the place will be below. To distinguish the pure and impure soul there will be only one criterion which is the merits and demerits of the man in the life. When Saadia talked about the abode of the soul, the later writings of Hebrew Bible such as Daniel 12:3 and Ecclesiastes 3:21 were used to prove the place of the soul after departing of soul from the body.¹¹¹

Because of the centrality of man and the soul in man, humankind is the final and perfect creature of God. Due to his obedience to the Law, the human will be resurrected after death in the world of reward. He believes it will happen when the redemption of Israel happens. The redemption will be beyond the borders of our study. Saadia sees the redemption of Israel and the resurrection of the human in parallel with each other.¹¹²

To sum up, Saadya believes a life after death in the grave and beyond the grave and that the soul has an angelic nature and is the entity that God created within the body. Because of its nature, it is invisible. I would say that Saadya manifested the belief in the

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 257

¹¹¹ Ibid, 242, and 257

¹¹² He mainly discusses the resurrection and redemption in his Treatises VII and VIII. Since they are not relevant to my topic, I did not examine these topics.

hereafter and an existence of soul after life in Judaism. He indicates the reasons of the ambiguity of the idea of afterlife in Torah. The scripture itself is a reason for the ambiguity of that idea. As I mentioned above, since the God let the people to use their own logic to figure out the existence of a life beyond the death, the Torah does not talk about the hereafter and the immortality of the soul explicitly. The habit of prophecy is the second reason that makes the concept of afterlife and soul vaguer, because of the tendency of human, among some average Jewish people and some scholars.

Afterlife and the Soul in Yehuda Halevi's Philosophy

Yehuda Halevi did not focus on the death and afterlife as much as Saadya Gaon; however, with the conversation of the king of Khazar (the Kuzari) and a rabbi, who was the guide of the king in his seeking the 'truth,' his masterpiece, the *Kuzari*, has some passages about afterlife, reward and punishment, nature, function and the fate of the soul after death in his first and fifth essays, as well as some other places. At the beginning of their conversation the Rabbi said to Kuzari: ¹¹³

We believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Who took the Jews out of Egypt with great wonders and miracles, Who sustained them in the desert, and.....The God sent Moses to give His Torah and later thousands of prophets throughout history who exhorted the populace to follow the Torah, and who taught about *the great reward for those who observe it and the arduous punishment for those who violate it.*

Reward and punishment for a Jew depend on how he or she practices the teachings of the Torah.¹¹⁴ His statement is a kind of manifestation of the faith and in this manifestation, reward and punishment found a place. However Halevi does not talk about when the

¹¹³ Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, *The Kuzari in Defense of Despised Faith* (12th Century), trans. N. Daniel

Korobkin (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.,1997), 12

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 46-47

reward and punishment will occur. The king asked the Rabbi about reward and punishment in the future life in Judaism because the other religions have richer and more bountiful guarantees than Judaism does.¹¹⁵ Because of the uncertainty of the textual sources and inadequate resources, it might be hard to grasp the notion of afterlife in Jewish tradition.

Before looking at the Rabbi's response to his question, it could be good to understand what Halevi was saying about the different levels of the creatures of the Creator in his first essay in *Kuzari*. He classified the creatures into five different levels according to their perfectness. In his classification inorganic things are at the lowest level and the prophets who are the 'supermen' are at the highest level.¹¹⁶ All humans have the desire to experience prophecy; but the only chosen nation, the Jews, can succeed in doing so because of the presence of God among them, having contacted with a prophet and their familiarity to the prophecy in their history.¹¹⁷ To contact with a prophet will provide to the individual a spiritual renewal and that individual departs from normal level of mankind to the angelic level. The soul, who has experienced the prophecy or has been contacted by a prophet, will return to its source, will separate from its physical senses,

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 46

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 16

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 45

and will be free from the fear of death.¹¹⁸ The soul can gain this level by practicing the wisdom and teachings of Torah.¹¹⁹

Kuzari wanted the sage to compare the guarantees of afterlife in Judaism to other religions. Halevi says that the Torah does not say that “if you perform this commandment, I will bring you to gardens and pleasures after death.” For Halevi (as for Saadya), Judaism, of course, believes in the afterlife, but it places a great deal of focus on the importance of living with the commandments during this life.¹²⁰ He says “the Jews are bounded to the Divinity through prophecy and near prophecy and the attachment of the Divinity to the Jews with grandeur, glory and wonders.”¹²¹ Because of their unique and different relationship with God, they do not need to have a concept of hereafter as the other religions’ followers have. However, gaining merits by using the teaching of the Torah in this life is important to keep the presence of the Divinity among the nation and gaining the reward in the hereafter.¹²² He believes that God tells them you will be a nation to Me and I will be a God to you. The one who has experienced the prophecy and the near prophecy, which can be experienced by living according to the teachings of the Torah, will desire death instead of avoiding from it.¹²³ Kogan S. Barry points this out in his essay, “*Who has implanted within us Eternal Life: Judah Halevi on Immortality and*

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 46, and some other places in his fifth essay that Halevi discusses the experience of prophecy and its function to be connected to the Deity.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 46

¹²⁰ Ibid, 47

¹²¹ Ibid, 47

¹²² Ibid, 46

¹²³ Ibid, 47

the Afterlife.” In spite of the fact that the prophet or the person who has experienced prophecy or near prophecy can be seen as the best evidence for the afterlife, having an experience like this should be understood as the reward in this world and the proof of the great reward in the world to come. Whatever the prophets experienced in this world will be experienced in the world to come by righteous Jews. I think that Halevi shows his trust to the fruit of the prophecy which is the Hebrew Bible by accepting the experience of the prophets as an evidence for the existence afterlife. The reward that these people have in this world can be seen a shadow of the great reward in the world to come. Since the prophetic characteristics, such as spiritual transformation, purity of the soul, and humility, that they have already experienced the reward of afterlife in this world. While the Jews can achieve prophecy because of their identity, the converts have to follow the words of prophet and become a saintly person.¹²⁴ Divinization is seen as the ultimate goal and good for the individual.¹²⁵ All rewards either the ones in this world or in the world to come depending on how an individual is close to the Divinity. The rewards in the world to come will be according to the closeness of the person to the Divinity in this world.¹²⁶ Halevi echoed this thought in one of his poem like this:

“Toward the source of life, of truth, I run
Impatient with a life of vanity,
To see my Master’s face is all I want
None other do I fear, none else revere.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 52

¹²⁵ Ibid, 50

¹²⁶ Ibid, 50 and 144

If only I could see Him in a dream,
I'd sleep at ease, not caring if I died.
I could see His face within my heart,
My eyes would never turn their gaze outside.”¹²⁷

Since God is the Giver of source of life, to see Him and have the experience of prophecy is his only aim in the life. Seeing Him even in a dream will be enough to have a better life in the world. Halevi also prays to the God by saying “draw me near to thee, my King and Lord” in his other poem.¹²⁸ The person who has some divine experiences will not care about the happiness in this world. The reason why the Torah has not mentioned the world to come explicitly might be explained by the presence of the Divinity; being with God is much more important than being happy after life.

As Yochanan Silman explained, Halevi relatively talks more about the life in the world, especially the life in Eretz Israel during the time of Temple, than afterlife. The life in the land of Israel during the temple era will provide to the individual the level of prophets.¹²⁹ If we assume that the level of the prophecy is the ultimate level, it can be achieved by using the wisdom and teaching of Torah and being in the Holy Land.¹³⁰ Judaism is unique in this way when we compare it to other religions. The followers of

¹²⁷ Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel, and the Soul* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 199

¹²⁸ Yehuda Halevi, *Servant of God* in <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mh113.htm>

¹²⁹ Yochanan Silman, *Philosopher and Prophet Judah Halevi, the Kuzari, and the Evolution of His Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 241-42

¹³⁰ Halevi, *The Kuzari*, Appendix B, 321

other religions think that as much as they resemble God, they will be rewarded in the world to come. Since being a servant of God in this world bring the reward in afterlife in Halevi's understanding, to be closer to Him in this world is important for him. Only if a person experienced the prophecy or near prophecy, due to the taste of that light, he or she might prefer death rather than the life in this world. For the ordinary people who are not witnesses of these kinds of great presences should not long for death, even if they died they will not have a reward as the ones who experienced the prophecy.¹³¹

Halevi refused what Kuzari claims about the richness of guarantees of other religions. Even he accepts that the Torah did not mention the rewards and punishments in afterlife clearly; the tradition of Jewish literature is rich enough with the concept of death and life after death.¹³² For Halevi the tradition is as authentic as the Scripture; he tried to fill the gap of belief in the hereafter with the rabbinic tradition related to afterlife. He referred some later writings to prove life after death in Judaism and the fate of the soul in hereafter. He quoted that the body will decay and the soul will return to God who gave it to man, and the resurrection will take place.¹³³ In addition, he mentioned the necromancy of Saul that he called the spirit of Samuel to consult about his destiny as a proof that soul has a life after death.¹³⁴ He quoted the Morning Prayer that tells that the soul is given, formed, breathed and preserved and finally will be taken by God, and then it will return to the individual in the future. Having the soul and returning it to the dead corpse are

¹³¹Halevi, *The Kuzari*, 45

¹³² Ibid, 52

¹³³ Ibid, 53

¹³⁴ Ibid, 53

reasons to thank God and exalt him according to the Morning Prayer.¹³⁵ Moreover, the concepts such as Garden of Eden and Gehanna in other religions were taken from the Torah.¹³⁶

To grasp the concept of soul might be another step to figure out the existence of life after death in Judaism. For this aim, it might be good to examine the soul, its nature, and fate in his philosophy. Halevi mainly talks about the concept of the soul in Judaism in his fifth essay in his book. He also uses the soul as a part of his analogy to tell different topics such as divinity to Kuzari. I will try to draw a map of his philosophy about the concept of soul to grasp the notion of afterlife in Judaism.

In his fifth essay, the Kuzari wants to learn more about the dialectic method to refute the teaching of other religions and the proofs of philosophers to protect his religion.¹³⁷ Halevi describes matter and form, elements, nature, the soul, the spiritual intellect, the world to come, and the specifications of speaking soul to comprehend Divine wisdom.¹³⁸ We will try to figure out how the rabbi understood the soul and world to come in his fifth essay, in *the Kuzari*.

Halevi accepts the existence of the soul, and its existence can be known through movement and sensation. He says that the cause beyond the movement and sensation is called soul, or soul force. Soul force can be divided into three parts. The first part is vegetative force which contains the growing force, nourishment and reproductive force,

¹³⁵ Ibid, 53-54

¹³⁶ Ibid, 54

¹³⁷ Ibid, 270

¹³⁸ Ibid, 258

and is common for plants and living creatures. The second force is living soul that is the power of locomotion and is shared by animals and humans. The last one is the speaking soul, which is unique for human and it is the ability to verbalize.¹³⁹

When we think the distinction between matter and form, the soul will be the form rather than a matter. Humans and animals are moving or perceiving because of their forms, not their matter.¹⁴⁰ All the forms are the completions in his philosophy and the soul completes the natural occurring physical object with built-in faculties, which is the human body.¹⁴¹ The soul is a non-compound being. If it were a combination of different elements, one of the elements in its substance would be more dominant than the others. Halevi states that “the soul is an external form like a seal engraved into clay vessel, which is neither from the form of the water or the earth.”¹⁴²

According to Halevi, the soul has an ethereal nature like the angels. The human body is the place where the soul resides. It does not occupy a place in the body, but it rules and operates the body.¹⁴³ The soul resides in the heart of man because the Divine soul needs a place to connect to the spirit of man like the flame and its wick.¹⁴⁴ Halevi thinks the heart of the human to be like the temple of God. The secondary repository for the soul is the brain, but it has still been conducted by the heart.¹⁴⁵ Whatever action is

¹³⁹ Ibid, 270-281

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 270

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 270

¹⁴² Ibid,271

¹⁴³ Ibid, 83

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 83

¹⁴⁵ Ibid,275

performed by the human being, it is prepared in the soul and it is the origin of all our actions.¹⁴⁶ The merits that connect man with Divinity will be sourced in the soul.¹⁴⁷

Halevi claims that the soul is not the physical and incidental entity. We can talk about its existence via its effects, and it is similar to angels and other divine entities.¹⁴⁸ Although the body needs the soul to exist, the soul does not need the body to exist. He uses the analogy of an old man to show that when body gets older, the soul becomes stronger than it used to be.¹⁴⁹ The soul has an infinite capacity in contrast to its repository. The soul will exist without the body. Since the soul is not perishable, it is, somehow, an immortal part of human beings. The faculties in the body such as mobility, sensual perception, imagination, and memory, all will die with the death of body.¹⁵⁰

When the soul is free from the attachment to the body, it will save itself from destruction. The speaking soul will be alive as long as it keeps its contact to the Divine Soul which was so called Active Intellect by philosophers. Prophecy is the way to attach self with the Divine Soul. Individual can be immortal through the experience of prophecy. The prophecy might give to the individual the level of prophet Ezekiel or above him. He or she can be called as the 'son of man' in the angelic realm to distinguish from the angels.¹⁵¹ It depends on the closeness to Divinity through the soul.¹⁵² In

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 271

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 281

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 280

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 280

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 275 and 281

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 47

¹⁵² Ibid, 281

Leviticus 19:2, God told Moses to speak to the congregation of the people of Israel and say them: ‘you shall be holy, for I am the Lord your God Holy.’¹⁵³ As we see in this verse God asks them to resemble to Him. It might be the only way for achieving the great reward at the end of life. To be like God and be with him are the ultimate goals for human being in Halevi’s understanding. If the soul attaches with Divinity, it will be free from any other attachments and bring the reward in the life after death.

In addition to the *Kuzari*, when we look at Halevi’s poems, we see that life in the earth, especially having a life in the Holy Land where the God has emanated, is one of the key figures in his philosophy.¹⁵⁴ Especially in his poetry, we can understand his desire to turn back to Israel from exile. He composed a famous poem which is called “Ode to Zion (Zionite).” In that poem, Halevi chiefly discuss about the presence of the Deity in the Holy Land and how it is special for him and his nation.¹⁵⁵ He defines the land as the place where the Shechinah (presence of the God) dwelt. Israel is a special place for him where God can have an especially strong presence. In the following pieces of Zionite, we can understand how Halevi sees the Holy Land:

“There the Shechinah dwelt in thee; and He,
God thy Creator, lo, He opened there
Toward the gates of Heaven the gates of thee.”

In another part of the poem Halevi talk to Zion;

¹⁵³ Ibid, 47

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 205 and His poet Ode to Zion

¹⁵⁵ Yehuda Halevi, Ode to Zion trans. Nina Davis, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Jan., 1900), 213-216

“Thy God desired thee for a dwelling-place;
And happy is the man whom He shall choose
And draw him nigh to rest within thy space.”

In other stanza of the same poem Halevi says that

“Zion! O perfect in thy beauty! found
With love bound up, with grace encompassing,
With thy soul thy companions' souls are bound.”¹⁵⁶

In these parts of the poem, he claims that there is a connection between the soul of Zion and the soul of the people of her. This connection can be interpreted as a correlation between the destiny of the Holy Land and God’s chosen people. Zion is the place where the God opens the gate of the heavens to humanly realms.¹⁵⁷ Since Zion is a place in this world where God contacts to the individuals, we can conclude that the life in the Holy Land is superior to the life in any other places in this world in Halevi’s understanding. Having a life in the Holy Land also gives to the individuals to get the great reward in the world to come

In conclusion, Halevi believed in the existence of afterlife; however the life in the chosen land is more important than anything in the world. The soul is the essence of human beings that provide them the knowledge of how to experience the prophecy. The experience of the prophecy or near prophecy can be the only way to be, in some sense, immortal. The soul, in his philosophy, has the capacity to experience the prophecy. In his classification of creatures, the human is the only being who carries the potential to be a

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁷ Ibid

prophet to communicate with the God. Being close to the divinity is an ultimate goal and reward for mankind. This can be achieved by being a member of God's chosen nation and being in the Holy Land, and for non-Jews, it can be gained by becoming a saintly person and following the words of prophets. Living in the land can make this process shorter than living in the other places in the world. The presence of God in the place and among His people is a great way to have an immortal life in the world to come.

Even the Torah does not discuss the afterlife and the reward and punishment in the afterlife explicitly. Some references still can be found in the Torah. In addition to these references from it, there is a rich and bountiful literature in Jewish tradition relevant to afterlife. As Halevi claims that the concept of Gehanna and Gan of Eden transformed from Judaism to the other religion.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

To define the belief in the hereafter and the concept of a world to come in Judaism, especially ancient Judaism is harder than it is for surrounding civilizations, such as the Egyptians and Mesopotamians. We do not have enough information concerning the Jewish conception of the hereafter and life after death in primary sources, i.e. Torah. In the secondary sources, i.e. the archeological findings in the settlement of the ancient Jews, there is more information about our subject. This lack of information about death and the hereafter in the sources and different interpretation of this limited sources led to an uncertain belief in the hereafter among some Jews and a misunderstanding of Judaism's belief in the world to come among non-Jews. As we have discussed above, while some Jews are uncertain about a life after death, some non-Jewish scholars claim that in the some sects of Judaism, there is nothing relevant to afterlife.¹⁵⁸ Some evidences from early Judaism and the Torah, as well as later ideas from Medieval Judaism, have been helpful to clarify better the development of the idea of soul and hereafter in Judaism. Creating a conversation between these three sources provided us a clearer concept of afterlife in Judaism. It also shows us that the reasons for assumptions to the ambiguity in this subject are based on the vagueness of the Scripture and some later re-readings of the Scripture.

As Friedman and Overton state, I would agree that the Hebrew Bible is not absolutely silent on this subject; it is whispering about the hereafter and the fate of the

¹⁵⁸ Adam, *Yahudilik*, 205-266

soul (individual) after death.¹⁵⁹ This whisper is enough to comprehend the subject that I am examining, with the help of archeological findings. Comparing these conclusions from the early period to later interpretations of the Torah by some philosophers of Judaism in the medieval times illuminates how these ideas developed in some strands of Judaism, particularly those represented by Halevi and Saadya Gaon.

What we find in the archeological finding related to death and life after death shows us the existence of a belief in the afterlife among the Jewish lay people. The findings in Dothan family's tomb confirm that the people prepared their dead relatives for an afterlife.¹⁶⁰ When we reflect on the fact that this tomb contained a window and two large storage jars, we can interpret these findings as the family's attempt to respond to their dead relatives' needs in the afterlife. In addition to this, some jewelry, amulets, ceramic vessels, plates, cooking pots, wine decanters, etc., were found in some other excavations in Judah.¹⁶¹ In addition to prove the existence of a notion of life after death among the ordinary Jewish people, these materials serve us to think their dead relatives have a life like we have in this world. They need the same things to sustain their life in the hereafter.

The terms that we have talked about might be another clue that shows us the existence of a cult of death and a life after death in ancient Judaism. If we think back to the meaning of the terms that were discussed in Chapter 2, it is clear that every one of

¹⁵⁹ Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 36

¹⁶⁰ Cooley, *Gathered to His People*, 50-51

¹⁶¹ Bloch-Smith, *The Cult of the Dead in Judah*, 218

them relates to something about the place where the dead live, or the inhabitants of that realm. *Sheol* is the place where dead people, the righteous and evildoers, go after death. *Rephaim* or *Teraphim* is the term used to describe the inhabitants of this other world. The practice of necromancy by Samuel to learn the destiny of King Saul can be interpreted as evidence for the connection between the human realm and the realm of the *rephaim*. As we have pointed out, Is.14:9 and 26:14 refer to *rephaim* as the dwellers of the netherworld. The prohibition against necromancy in Deuteronomy can also be interpreted as proof of the existence of a cult of death in the ancient Jewish community. *Elohim* was also translated as the spirits of dead ancestors and the spirit of Samuel equated with the ‘*elohim*’ in translation of Samuel 28:13-14. The dead ancestors have the power to inform humans about their future like in this example, or they can impact the life of the living ones. The last term that we have discussed is *nephesh*, which means living force or breath; and we saw that it was a twofold term. It might be *nephesh hayyah* or *nephesh met*. Either the corpse or the living one can have *nephesh*.¹⁶² The terms relevant to the abode of the dead give clear indications about belief in a life after death in early Judaism.

The belief and opinions concerning afterlife in the society was somehow suppressed by the official religious officers, the priests. The rituals related to death were performed by ordinary people; the priests did not have any authority over these rituals in ancient times.¹⁶³ Overton and Friedman claim that the P, E, and D sources of Torah did

¹⁶² Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 56-57

¹⁶³ Friedman and Overton, *Death and Afterlife*, 49

not focus on afterlife clearly.¹⁶⁴ It is suppressed for the reason that either these death practices do not provide an income for the priesthood or that in order to establish a monotheistic religion, the priests sought to end any form or practice of ancestor worship.¹⁶⁵ They mention another reason for suppressing the belief or opinion about afterlife. They claim that the priestly group, “Levites came from outside the land; they did not have ancestral territory, which is essential to local veneration.”¹⁶⁶ They speculate two more possible reasons why the priesthood class tried to suppress the belief in life after death. They say that the Levites were protesting against the religion of the Egyptians, which was ripe with belief in the hereafter. The last reason they mentioned is that the Torah had forbidden priests to come in contact with or touch the corpse of a dead person.¹⁶⁷ We do not know the exact reason for the removal of the belief and practices related to death in the Torah; but the existence of mortuary practices and a cult of the dead among the early Jewish people is an accepted fact for scholars such as Elizabeth Bloch- Smith, Richard Elliot Friedman and Shawna Dolansky Overton. In contrast with what we have found in the archeological record relating to the existence of a cult of death and a belief in a concept of afterlife, the scriptural sources, and the vague terms regarding death and afterlife in the scriptural sources as we have explained, are not enough to demonstrate a belief in life after death.

¹⁶⁴Ibid, 49

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 51, and Bloch-Smith, *The Cult of the Dead in Judah*, 223.

¹⁶⁶ Friedman and Overton, 54

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 54

When we look at the Middle Ages of the religion, a scholar of Judaism has reason to portray Judaism as a perfect and true religion with a belief in the hereafter and existence of life after death.¹⁶⁸ Both Saadya and Halevi discussed the existence of a belief in afterlife in Judaism. They both agree about the existence of afterlife in Judaism.

Saadya tries to show the concept of the soul and its existence after death in his book's ninth treatise. He accepts that the Torah does not talk about the soul and afterlife explicitly because of two major reasons. The first reason is the method of Torah. He claims that the reward in this world is not something that human reason can show; but the idea of reward in the world to come can be figured out through reason.¹⁶⁹ The second reason of the ambiguity of aforementioned topics in the Hebrew Bible is the 'habit of prophecy' in Saadya philosophy. He explains that humans have a tendency to focus on the closer aims rather than the further goals.¹⁷⁰ Prophecy -- while not the level of the world to come -- is an important goal in this world. Although he says that the Hebrew Bible does not speak about death and afterlife explicitly, he still gives references from the Hebrew Bible to prove the existence of a realm for the reward and punishment in the afterlife.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ When we think that both Gaon and Halevi wrote their books to support their own religion against the Karaites and other religions, their concern regarding how to show the perfectness of their own belief can be understood.

¹⁶⁹ Altmann, 319 in *3 Jewish Philosophers*

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 319-320

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 320-322

In *Servant of God*, Ode to Zion and poem in *Gazelle*'s page 199, Halevi discusses why the Hebrew Bible does not mention reward and punishment in the afterlife and also in places in his book.¹⁷² His main focus on this question is related to what Saadya called "the habit of prophecy". He believes that the relationship between God and the Israelites is a unique relationship. God chose the Israelites as His own nation and emanated among them. There are two-way connections between God and his people in his understanding. While the Jews are connected to God through prophecy, God attaches Himself to the nation via glory and wonders.¹⁷³ The prophets or the ones who had the experience of prophecy will not care about what awaits them in the world to come. For him, the life in the Holy Land is much more important than the life in the other places of the world. For various reasons, Judaism for Saadya (as for Halevi) focuses on many aspects of proper living in this world - but of course, for Saadya (as for Halevi) Judaism believes in the world to come. This can be seen in the *Kuzari* as well. Since the king is asking about his action in this world, Halevi mainly discuss the life in this world. I can say same thing for Torah. Since the Hebrew Bible is written or revealed for the world the individuals sustain their life, it talks about this more clearly than the other world. Both Saadya and Halevi believe in the existence and importance of the future life.

¹⁷² Yehuda Halevi, *Servant of God* in <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl13.htm>, Raymond P.

Scheindlin, Yehuda Halevi, Ode to Zion trans. Nina Davis, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Jan., 1900), 213-216, and *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel, and the Soul* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 199 .

¹⁷³ Halevi, *The Kuzari*, 47

Saadya Gaon gives much richer descriptions of the life after death than does Halevi. According to Saadya, life after death begins after the death of the individual; the souls of the dead begin to suffer after the person's body is put into the grave.¹⁷⁴ The approach of Saadya has similarities to the ideas of the scholars who think that the grave is the gate of *Sheol* which we have discussed above in the cult of the dead. Being witness to the decomposition of the body, the soul will suffer in the same way as people who have witnessed the destruction of their houses.¹⁷⁵

In his understanding, the soul of the dead will be stored until a time decided by God. God will re-unify the body and soul after He has finished creating every soul and body. Saadya accepts that human beings are the center of the universe, and that humans are the only creatures who can obey the Law. Because of these reasons, they will be resurrected by the order of God, and the soul will reunify with body.¹⁷⁶ Since he has an absolute belief in reward and punishment in the future life, he believes in an everlasting life for the body and soul together. While *Gan Eden* will be a reward for the righteous people, *Gehenna* will be a punishment for the wicked people. He believes that while the pure soul will be going to below, the impure soul will go to the above. It is a kind of similar concept of *Sheol*; it was seen as the place deep under the ground where the wicked people would go.

¹⁷⁴ Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 242, and 257

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 242, and 257

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 235, 257-258, 260, and 264

Halevi also gives some descriptions of an afterlife, but it is not as rich as Gaon. He states that Scripture shows that “the earthy elements within human’s body shall return to earth and his spirit will return to God who gave it to him.”¹⁷⁷ In addition, he mentions the resurrection of Elijah and the necromancy of Saul to show the existence of life of soul after death.¹⁷⁸ He thinks the Garden of Eden is a spiritual plane that was created by God for humans. *Gehanna* is the valley near to Jerusalem; “it used to be used to burn impure bones and carcasses and other forms of spiritual impurity.”¹⁷⁹ At the end of his first essay, he claims that the Jewish tradition has a lot of details regarding afterlife, but he does not mention any of them.

We should look at what Saadya and Halevi suggest about the nature of the soul, which is considered to be the immortal part of the human body in other traditions such as Greek philosophy and Christian and Islamic theology. They both agree upon the Creator of soul. It is created by God, who is the Source and Giver of life. According to Saadya, the soul and body are created together, when God decided to create the body. It is not eternal because the only eternal one is God, who is the cause of everything.¹⁸⁰ It is invisible because of its ethereal nature. It has a fine, pure, and simple nature like angels, but we know the existence of the soul from its function.¹⁸¹ God arranges a time for the existence of the soul and body together, and when this time is consumed, the angel of

¹⁷⁷ Halevi, *The Kuzari*, 53

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 53

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 54

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 234, 265, and 336

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 243

death will separate them from each other. They will come together in the world to come.¹⁸²

The merits and demerits of a human have an impact on the soul. The soul will become refined and pure as long as good actions are predominant in the person's lifetime.¹⁸³ According to the good that is done by the person in this world, the soul and body might suffer or experience pleasure in the world to come.¹⁸⁴ Although this world is important for him for gaining the pleasures of the other world, the reward in the world to come is a bigger and more important goal for Saadya. The importance of this world comes from being a stage to act merits and demerits which will be criteria in the Day of Judgment.

According to Saadya the soul resides in the heart of mankind. It is a pure rational substance and the whole source of wisdom and intelligence. It is a source of perfection in the human being; he says that when it departs from the body, the body loses all of its excellence.¹⁸⁵ Further, the soul is the source of all knowledge and wisdom; he gives the example of a blind man, who is still able to dream, even though he cannot see. In this analogy, Gaon shows us even the individual lost one of his or her abilities, as long as the soul resides in the body, the person can be open to receive something over his or her capacity due to the nature of the soul. Saadya believes that every creature needs an organ to perform its action. The soul therefore needs a body to use its faculties of discernment,

¹⁸² Ibid, 235, and 253

¹⁸³ Ibid, 235, and 246

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 235, and 246

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 180, 235, 237, 242 and 244

appetite, and courage.¹⁸⁶ The soul and body come together; the soul cannot remain separate from the body. To complete its actions, the soul needs its instrumental part. Due to the nature of the soul, it will be complete itself by the existence of body.¹⁸⁷

Halevi also discusses the existence of the soul after death. The soul who comes in contact with the Deity will be like Him.¹⁸⁸ In his classification of the creature, the human is the only creature that carries the speaking soul within his or her body. Through the soul, mankind can experience prophecy and can be with God. He accepts the resurrection of the soul after death, but he does not discuss it in detail.¹⁸⁹

The nature of the soul, the faculties of the soul, and the fate of the soul have an important place in Halevi's philosophy. I consider knowing how he defines the soul to have a better understanding of afterlife and the fate of soul in the hereafter. The soul is a non-compound naturally-occurring object with built-in faculties. It is a form not a matter. This makes soul a substance. It has an angelic nature. It is invisible and can be known by its effects.¹⁹⁰ Halevi suggests that the cause beyond movement and sensation is called soul or soul force.¹⁹¹ He divided the soul into three forces; vegetative, living, and

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 243, and 247

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 243, and 247

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 53-54

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 285

¹⁹⁰ Halevi, *The Kuzari*, 271

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 270

speaking soul.¹⁹² Among these forces speaking soul is the ability of humans that gives the opportunity to contact with the Divinity.

The soul does not occupy a place in the body; but it resides within the body in the heart. Since it does not occupy finite space in the heart, we could not say it really resides in the heart.¹⁹³ It manages the body.¹⁹⁴ The heart is not the only repository of the soul; the brain is the secondary place where the soul resides.¹⁹⁵ He sees the heart as the place where the individual can come in contact with the Divinity. Through the soul, a human can experience prophecy and can reach the ultimate goal of becoming closer to God and immortal.¹⁹⁶

Halevi claims that the soul is the superior part of the human being. He supports this idea with the assertion that the soul does not need the body to exist, which differs from Saadya's writings. He says that the soul does not need to exist, but the body needs its form to be alive and use all its forces. While the soul has an infinite power and is imperishable, the body will lose its strength and decompose after death. Whatever abilities or power we assume that the body has will eventually decay at the death of the person. However, the soul can be closer to the Divine Soul and experience the prophecy,

¹⁹² Ibid,270

¹⁹³ Ibid, 206

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 275-281

¹⁹⁵ Ibid,275

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 4-52, and 281

then become immortal.¹⁹⁷ The soul who experienced prophecy can gain an angelic level and will return to its Source, who is God.¹⁹⁸

As a result, we can say that either in early Judaism or in Medieval Jewish academia, the idea of an afterlife finds a more certain place in the religion, but to draw an absolute picture of the belief in afterlife is difficult. The uncertainty of death and afterlife stems from either Scripture or philosophical treatment of the idea of the hereafter. The existence of a cult of the dead in ancient times can be seen as the first step of belief in a life after death. During the reconstruction of Judaism, we saw that there was a systematic suppression of the beliefs and practices related to afterlife by the official priests. The cult of the dead and other mortuary practices continued among ancient Jewish people in the ancient times. In the Medieval Ages, the philosophers, especially Halevi, defended Judaism against other religions and the movements within the religion and tried to show Judaism as true and flawless religion. As a result, the idea of belief in a life after death exists in Judaism throughout its history, but at certain times is realizable than other times. As we have seen that in different period of Jewish history, the belief in hereafter sometimes become vaguer like the early period. However it can be also more solid and certain as the other Abrahamic religions like in the Medieval Ages. Although today, Judaism is described as the religion of present time and this world, we have shown that it has a rich description of afterlife and the other-worldly realm. The uncertainty of the belief in the hereafter and the world to come stems from the vague terms about the death

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 280-281

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 47 and some other places in his fifth essay in *the Kuzari*.

in the Hebrew Bible and the re-reading of the scriptures regarding to death and its beyond. Unlike the incorrect assumptions about the non existence of afterlife among the ordinary people and some scholars, Judaism is the religion which has a concept of afterlife and immortality of the soul. By putting the cult of the dead in the early times and two distinguished and influenced medieval Jewish philosophers in conversation with each others despite the existence of some ambiguous passages relevant to afterlife, I proved that Judaism offer an afterlife and reward and punishment in the future life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adam, Baki. "Yahudilik" in *Yasayan Dunya Dinleri*, ed. Presidency of Turkish Religious Affairs (POTRA), 205-266. Cankaya, Ankara: POTRA 2006.
- Avery-Peck, Alan J. and Neusner, Jacob. *Judaism in Late Antiquity: Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection and the World-To-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1999.
- Bloch-Smith, Elizabeth M. "Death in the Life of Israel." in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. Gittlen, Barry M. 139- 167. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbraus, 2002.
- Bloch-Smith, Elizabeth M. "The Cult of the Dead in Judah: Interpreting the Material Remains." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111.2(1992): 213-224.
- Bookstaber, Philip D., *The Idea of Development of the Soul in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. Philadelphia: Morris Spcoly Inc., 1950.
- Brichto, Herbert C. , "Kin, Cult, and Afterlife- A Biblical Complex," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44, (1973).
- Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period: 450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.* Ed. Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1996, s.vv "Death." "Sheol."
- Efros, Israel. *Studies in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, New York, NY: Colombia University Press, 1974.
- Encyclopaedia Judaica. 2nd ed. s.vv. "Afterlife: Jewish Concept." "Death" "Soul." "Soul, Immortality of."
- Frank, Daniel H., and Leaman, Oliver, Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, New York, NY: Cambridge University
- Friedman, David N., the Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary, V. 2 s.vv. "Death." "Dead, Cult of the." "Dead, Abode of the." New Heaven, CT: University Yale Press, 1992.
- Friedman, Richard E. and Overton, Shawna D., "Death and Afterlife: The Biblical Silence," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity Part 4 Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection & The World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner, Leiden ,NV, The Netherlands: Brill, 2000.

- Gaon, Saadia. *The Book of Beliefs and Opinion* (11th century), trans. Samuel Rosenblatt, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976.
- Gordon, Cyrus H., "Canaanite Mythology." in *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed. Kramer, Samuel N. 181-218. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, INC, 1961.
- Halevi, Rabbi Yehuda. *The Kuzari in Defense of Despised Faith* (12th Century), trans. N. Daniel Korobkin, Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997.
- Halevi, Yehuda *Servant of God* in <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl13.htm>
- Halevi, Yehuda. Ode to Zion trans. Nina Davis, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Jan., 1900)
- Hallote, Rachel S., *Death, Burial, and Afterlife in the Biblical World*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001.
- Heinemann, Isaak. "Introduction to Kuzari" in *3 Jewish Philosophers*, ed. Hans Lewy, Alexander Altmann and Isaak Heinemann, 331-347, New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2006.
- Hoffner, Jr. Harry A., "Hittite tarpis and Hebrew Teraphim," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 27 (1968).
- Hughes, Aaron W., *Jewish Philosophy A-Z*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Husik, Isaac. *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, Athenaeum, NY: The Murray Printing Company, 1969.
- Hyman, Arthur. *Eschatological Themes in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, Milwaukee, WS: Marquette University Press, 2002.
- Ilan, David. "Mortuary Practices in Early Bronze Age Canaan," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 65.2 (2002): 92-104.
- Lambert, W.G. "Old Testament Mythology in its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *Congress Volume, Jerusalem 1986*, ed. Emerton, J.A. 124- 143. Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1988.
- Lamm, Norman. "Man's Position in the Universe. A Comparative Study of the Views of Saadia Gaon and Maimonides" *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 3 (January, 1965): 208-234.

- Lang, Bernard. "Life after Death in the Prophetic Promise," in *Congress Volume Jerusalem 1986*, ed. Emerton, J.A., Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1988:144- 156.
- Lewis, Theodore J. "How Far can Text Take Us? Evaluating Textual Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Israelites Belief about Death." In *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. Gittlen, Barry M. 169-217. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbraus, 2002.
- Lewy, Hans, Altmann, Alexander and Heinemann, Isaak, eds. *3 Jewish Philosophers*. New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2006.
- O'day, G.R. "Intertextuality" *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John H. Hayes 546-548 (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1999).
- Raphael, Simcha P., *Jewish Views of Afterlife*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1994.
- Routledge, Robin L. "Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament." *Journal of European Baptist Studies*: 22-39.
- Scheindlin, Raymond P. *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel, and the Soul*, New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991.
- Silman, Yochanan *Philosopher and Prophet Judah Halevi, the Kuzari, and the Evolution of His Thought*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Sirat, Collette. *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Tanenbaum, Adena. *The Contemplative Soul: Hebrew Poetry and Philosophical Theory in Medieval Spain*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002.
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha ed. Coogan, Michael, D. New York: Oxford, 2001.
- W. Hughes, Aaron. "Halevi, Judah" in *Jewish Philosophy A-Z* ed. Oliver Leaman New York: NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Watson, Paul L. "The Death of 'Death' in the Ugaritic Text." *Journal of American Oriental Society* 92.1 (Jan. - Mar., 1972): 60-64.