THE FLOOD NARRATIVE IN ANCIENT PERSIAN RELIGIONS: A DOCTRINAL ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract:

The flood story is one of the most widespread narratives among nations. It has attracted the attention of religions and human civilizations throughout the ages, and this story was especially present and prominent in the religions of Mesopotamia. By contrast, flood stories in the Persian heritage were not clear, and the question of whether the flood was affirmed among them was a matter of disagreement among Muslim scholars. The research problem may be formulated in the following question: To what extent is the flood narrative present in Persian religions? And what is its doctrinal nature?

This study reveals the sources and details of the story in the Persian heritage, and draws attention to the doctrinal dimension in these myths, according to an analytical method. It does so by analyzing Persian flood myths in terms of their contents and uncovering their doctrinal dimensions. Among the religions of Persia that mentioned the story are Zoroastrianism and Mithraism.

Among the most important findings of this study is that the Persian, or Aryan, heritage contained a number of myths and stories, some of which overlapped and blended with one another. The story of the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him, in Zoroastrianism was one form of this overlap. The myth was not of Zoroastrian origin, although it reinforced some of their beliefs.

As for the Mithraic myth, the researcher was unable to determine its origin and history: whether it goes back to the earliest appearance of the worship of Mithra among the Aryan tribes in India, or to the time when his worship moved to Persia, or to the Romans. Nor are there any known remains that attest to this narrative. The researcher did not find the story in their religious and popular traditions; all the information she found about the story consists only of scattered fragments in books and extremely scarce information in contemporary sources.

Keywords: Narrative; Myth; Flood; Religions; Zoroastrianism; Mithraism; Persia.

Introduction:

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and may peace and blessings be upon the noblest of Allah's creation, our Master Muhammad, and upon his family and all his Companions.

By the will of Allah the Exalted, the story of the Flood was made a sign for humankind. It has therefore remained immortalized in history and deeply embedded in human consciousness since the earliest times, attaining wide circulation across diverse civilizations and religions throughout the ages, in both the East and the West.

What is striking, however, is the silence of historical sources concerning Flood myths in the religions of Persia. At the same time, Muslim scholars have differed over the question of whether the Flood may be said to have been attested among the Persians.

This study seeks to uncover the Flood myth in the religions of Persia through recourse to primary sources and to examine the doctrinal and religious dimensions of these myths through an analytical method.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study may be seen in the following points:

1. It addresses a Qurʾānic narrative that has occupied an important place in the religions and civilizations of humankind across different times and geographical settings.

2. It highlights the ambiguity surrounding the story of the Flood in Persian civilization and the lack of awareness among researchers and specialists in mythology regarding the Persian Flood.
3. It examines aspects that have remained understudied in doctrinal writings related to this narrative, especially as represented in the religions of Persia.

Reasons for Choosing the Topic:

Several reasons led the researcher to select this topic:

1. The significance of the Flood narrative in religions and civilizations throughout the ages.
2. The researcher's desire to provide specialists with a reference work that sheds light on the story of the Flood in the religions of Persia.
3. The absence of a study discussing the doctrinal dimension of Flood narratives in the religions of Persia.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to achieve several objectives:

1. To investigate the story of the Flood and its sources in the religions of Persia.
2. To analyse of the doctrinal and religious dimension in flood myths among the religions of Persia.

Research Problem and Questions

The research problem may be expressed in the following question:

To what extent is the flood narrative present in Persian religions, and what is its doctrinal nature?

From this main question, which represents the core and focus of the study, other subsidiary questions arise that serve to cover the various aspects of the topic. Taken together, the answers to these questions constitute an answer to the main question. They are as follows:

1. Which religions in Persia mentioned the flood story?

2. What are the sources of the story in the religions of Persia, and what are its contents?
3. Are there doctrinal dimensions revealed by the Persian myths?

Methodology and Procedures:

In this study, I will adopt the analytical method, by analyzing Persian flood myths in terms of their contents and uncovering their doctrinal dimension, through the following procedures:

1. Identifying the religions of Persia in which the story of the Flood appears.
2. Providing a concise introduction to each religion, particularly with regard to its doctrinal and ritual aspects and related matters.
3. Presenting the Flood texts found in these religions in their original wording, insofar as they remain within the accepted limits of quotation in academic research. As for lengthy texts, the study confines itself to a summary and to those passages most relevant as textual evidence, followed by analysis and discussion of the aspects that serve the research problem.

Structure of the Study

The study consists of an introduction, two main sections, and a conclusion, as follows:

Section One: The Flood in Zoroastrianism

First Subsection: An Introduction to Zoroastrianism Second Subsection: Analysis of the Flood Narrative in Zoroastrianism

Section Two: The Flood in Mithraism

First Subsection: An Introduction to Mithraism Second Subsection: Analysis of the Flood Narrative in Mithraism

Conclusion: Includes the principal findings and recommendations.

Research Terminology

This study includes several key terms whose main characteristics should be clarified, since understanding them has implications for grasping

the nature of the texts under study. The following is a brief definition of these terms, presented in two sections.

Section One: Definition of Narrative

Linguistically, narration derives from *sarada*, meaning to bring one thing after another in an orderly sequence, each following the other consecutively. One says *sarada al-ḥadīth* and the like, meaning that he narrates it in a continuous sequence. Sard means sequential or consecutive.

Technically, narration is the manner in which a story is told through the narrator, the story, and the narratee, as well as through the influences to which it is subject, some of which relate to the narrator and the narratee, while others relate to the story itself.

Thus, narrativity is "a science concerned with the study of literary genres and the rules of the system that governs them. It is a science based on the study of narrative discourse and its internal structure, which delineates artistic characteristics and features that determine the elements constituting the literariness or poetics of narrative discourse."

It is also "the science concerned with the manifestations of narrative discourse in style, structure, and meaning."

Simply put, it is "the presentation of an event, or a series of successive events, and of real or imaginary reports through language. Every narrative requires an event and characters acting within a specific time and place, through a narrator who conveys all of this to the listener and the reader."

Section Two: The Difference between Myth and Fabulous Tale

Confusion may arise in the use of these terms because of the similarities and overlaps among them. Some may refer to myth and epic as fabulous tale, or vice versa. Therefore, I will define these terms:

First: Definition of Myth

Linguistically, myth is the singular of myths *(asāṭīr)*, meaning falsehoods and reports that lack order or coherence.

It is said: *saṭara fulān ʿalaynā yasṭuru* when someone produces reports resembling falsehood. It is also said: he writes what has no basis, meaning that he fabricates it.

The linguistic meaning corresponds to the use of the word asāṭīr in the Noble Qur'an, as in His saying: ***"When Our verses are recited to him, he says, 'Legends of the former peoples'"*** [al-Qalam: 15]; that is, the falsehoods of the ancients, which the earlier peoples wrote and inscribed in books in the form of stories and narratives.

Technically, myth is a form of literary text that expresses sacred historical tales, blended with imaginings and fabulous tales concerning the acts of gods and demigods and the manifestation of their powers in relation to the origins of things, such as creation and existence. It may also express the customs and rituals of a particular group.

Second: Definition of the Fabulous Tale

Linguistically, a fabulous tale is an amusing tale based on falsehood. The term has come to be applied to every tale that is deemed false and regarded with wonder.

Technically, it is a non-sacred heroic narrative filled with exaggerations and supernatural elements. Its principal protagonists are humans or jinn, and the gods play no role in it.

Conclusion

- Each of these terms has its own distinctive feature, making it an independent term in its own right. The essential differences among them have become clear through the explanation of their respective characteristics, despite the common elements they share.
- Once we recognize the distinction between these concepts, and the essential differences among them become clear, it becomes evident why each of them, myth and fabulous tale, was written in a particular style.
- These concepts indicate the presence of supernatural elements and exaggerations that sound minds cannot accept, as will become clear throughout the study.
- It is not correct to apply the term fabulous tale to myths, because the fabulous tale is a fabrication, unlike myth, which consists of true stories woven together with imaginings and exaggerations.

1 - SECTION ONE: THE FLOOD IN ZOROASTRIANISM

1.1 - First Subsection: An Introduction to Zoroastrianism:

First: Origin of the Name:

Zoroastrianism is regarded as a branch of Magianism(1). It derives its name from its founder, Zoroaster ibn Asbiman, whom its adherents identify as the prophet of the Magi(2).

Second: Religious Authority and Historical Emergence:

Zoroaster is said to have begun his mission in the northwestern region of Iran(3), after which the religion spread throughout Persia and India. At present, however, it has become a declining religion, with only a small minority of adherents remaining(4).

It should be noted that determining the date of the Zoroastrian mission with precision is extremely difficult(5), though there is no doubt that it is an ancient religion.

As for their sacred book, it is called the *Avesta*, and it remains their holy scripture to this day. It is also referred to as *Abasta* and *Abastāq*, meaning "foundation" or "origin" (6). It is divided into five parts: the first concerns Zoroastrian worship, sacrifices, and liturgical hymns; the second is a continuation of the rites of sacred sacrifice; the third deals with purity, medicine, jurisprudence, and the natural sciences; the fourth contains religious hymns and the fate of souls after death; and the fifth is concerned with prayer, festivals, religious ceremonies, and their hymns(7).

The *Avesta*, according to them, is the revealed word of the Lord bestowed upon Zoroaster. It is accompanied by an exegesis attributed to Zoroaster called the *Zend*, and this exegesis has itself been supplemented by several further commentaries and explanations composed by their scholars(8).

Third: Doctrines of This Religion:

Zoroastrians believe that *Ahura Mazda*, that is, "the Wise Lord," is God Almighty, and they distinguish Him from the other deities(9). Despite this, they claim the existence of two principles, one eternal and the other originated, referred to in Persian as *Yazdan* and *Ahriman*, that is, light and

darkness. These two are in perpetual conflict, dividing between them the realms of good and evil, until light overcomes darkness and each returns to its own world. They also believe that these two principles are the source of the beings of the world, and that composite existence arose through their intermixture(10).

They also believe in a plurality of gods, assigning *Anāhida* and *Ardvī* as deities of water and fertility, *Haoma* as the god of vegetation, *Tishtrya* as the god of rain, *Vāyu* as the god of winds, and *Mithra* as the god of covenants and treaties, in addition to other functions attributed to him. This group of deities is collectively known as the *Yazatas*, meaning those worthy of worship. They also venerate elements of nature such as fire, as well as domesticated animals such as cattle, dogs, and others(11).

With regard to prophecy, they believe that the first of their prophets and kings was Adam, peace be upon him, whom they identify as *Kayūmarth*. They also affirm the prophet hood of *Ushahank* (12), *Tahmūrath* (13), *Jamshid* (14), and Zoroaster, whom they identify with Abraham, peace be upon him. It should also be noted that they believe he received revelation, that his religion is the true religion and the final religion, and that the scriptures of Abraham, peace be upon him, are their sacred book, the *Avesta*(15).

Their sacred text further indicates that they believe in judgment, the bridge, the scale, Paradise, and Hell, and they also affirm the existence of a third intermediate station reserved for those whose good deeds and bad deeds are equal (16).

Fourth: Rituals, Laws, and Religious Practices:

Among the most prominent of these are prayer. They have several prayers, including a daily prayer, which the Zoroastrian performs in a state of ablution, standing before fire or the sun and reciting his hymns. Reports differ as to whether their daily prayers number three or five. They also have prayers specific to occasions such as birth, marriage, and death(17).

Among the gravest of major sins in their religion is for a person to propagate any religion other than Zoroastrianism (18).

Among their prohibitions is the burial of the dead in the earth, owing to the sanctity they ascribe to it and the impurity they attribute to the human corpse. For this reason, they constructed special buildings for placing the dead, which they call *dakhma*, and they believe this place to be permanently defiled(19).

As for their places of worship, ancient Zoroastrianism is not known to have possessed temples or idols. Later, however, they established fire temples for the performance of their other rituals(20).

They also have a distinctive emblem by which they are set apart from others, namely a belt known as the *kusti*, which every Zoroastrian wears from the age of fifteen as a symbol of belonging to the Zoroastrian religion (21).

1.2 - Second Subsection: Analysis of the Flood Narrative in Zoroastrianism

Muslim historians have differed in their views concerning whether the subject of the Flood is established among the adherents of this religion, and their positions may be summarized in four views:

The first view: affirms the existence of a Flood during the reign of King Jamshid, as mentioned by al-Masʿūdī(22).

The second view: holds that the Persians were unfamiliar with the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him, and did not regard it as part of their creed. This view is reported by both al-Masʿūdī and Ibn al-Athīr(23).

The third view: states that some of them, though not all, acknowledged the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him. Those who held this view maintained that the Flood occurred in the region of Babylon and its surrounding areas, and they claimed that it did not reach their own lands(24).

The fourth view: maintains that all of them acknowledged the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him. This view is mentioned by al-Qannūjī(25).

The researcher surveyed the principal works on the religions, history, and literature of Persia[26], and found no account of the Flood except what appears in the sacred scripture of Zoroastrianism, namely the *Myth of Yima*, and the Flood myth of *Ahriman and Mithra*, which is the subject of the following section.

As for the Myth of Yima, which is the subject of this subsection, it occurs in the third part of the *Vendidad*, that is, the law against evil spirits.

It should be noted that the *Vendidad* was composed later than the other parts of the *Avesta*, although its roots stretch deep into antiquity and go back to Aryan traditions held by the ancient Persians before Zoroastrianism[27]. This means that the Myth of Yima forms part of the ancient Aryan heritage and is not among the original foundations of Zoroastrianism. This may support the view of those who held that the Persians did not believe in the Flood of Noah, peace be upon him, as an article of faith. At the same time, there are several considerations that may suggest otherwise, as will become clear below.

If we consider the protagonist of the Flood narrative, there are several indicators that invite the interpretation of this myth as a version of the story of the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him, namely:

1. There are points of similarity between what is reported concerning Yima and our master Noah, peace be upon him, insofar as they state that he was the first to speak with the gods and the first to be entrusted with conveying the message and religion[28].
2. The duration of his reign was nine hundred years, or nine hundred and ten years [29].
3. He was the first among people to make use of ships and vessels and to set them upon the water[30].
4. He was the one who restored the earth to life and habitation after the severe winter, identified here with the Flood [31].
5. In one translation of the *Avesta*, this myth is described as a true account of real events that unfolded in the following sequence: cosmic freezing, the melting of snow, and then a universal Flood. It is also stated that Yima played the role of savior during the global Flood, much like

Utnapishtim in Babylonian myth and Noah in the Torah and the Noble Qurʾān, and that Yima's structure was like the Ark of Noah, peace be upon him, in that it saved humankind [32].

By contrast, there are other indications suggesting that the hero of the myth is not our master Noah, peace be upon him:

1. The hero of the myth bears several names according to Persian languages and sources. In Avestan he is called *Yima Hshāyeti*, meaning Yima the Radiant; in Pahlavi he is called *Jamshid*; in Achaemenid remains he is associated with *Takht-e Jamshid*; and he is also called *Jamshīdh*, which is an abbreviated form of *Yima Xshaēta*. They also call him *Jamshīdūn* and "the son of Tahmūrath." The overall meaning of these names is "the shining radiant king" or "the spirit of the sun." None of these names, despite their variation across languages, indicates that he is our master Noah, peace be upon him[33].
2. No historian has explicitly stated that Yima is our master Noah, peace be upon him.
3. The Persians liken our master Noah, peace be upon him, to their sixth king, *Farīdūn*, who is descended from Yima, the hero of the myth, particularly in view of his three sons who inherited the earth after him. Some Muslim historians followed this line of interpretation[34]. Al-Bīrūnī commented on the Persian claim that Farīdūn was Noah, peace be upon him, by saying that this was an embellished assertion that would not escape the notice of anyone with even minimal knowledge of chronology and genealogy[35].
4. If one accepts that the Myth of Yima is in fact the story of the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him, then how can Yima be the hero of the myth while Farīdūn is the Persians' Noah and is himself descended from Yima[36] ?
5. There is also disagreement concerning the character of Farīdūn and the duration of his reign. Miskawayh said: "It is said that he was Dhū al-Qarnayn mentioned in the Noble Qurʾān" [37]. Some historians state that he ruled for five hundred years [38], while others state that he ruled for more than two thousand years[39].

6. The Persians compare Yima to our master Solomon, peace be upon him, because of his authority over the jinn, who acted at his command [40]. They also compare him to our master Noah, peace be upon him, in view of the Flood narrative, as noted above. This reveals inconsistency even in their understanding of Yima's identity.
7. Al-Masʿūdī interpreted the Myth of Yima, known as the myth of the severe winter, as a Flood. Yet elsewhere he confirmed that: "The Persians do not know the Flood of Noah, peace be upon him" [41].

There are also three issues relating specifically to Yima, the hero of the myth, which must be noted, as they reinforce and complete the preceding argument:

1. Yima is regarded as one of the earliest Persian kings, whose age was associated with fabulous tales, and in whose portrayal Indian and Persian myths became intertwined. The sources are unclear as to whether he was a god or a king[42]. He also occupies a beloved place in Iranian tales after Zoroaster. [43]
2. On the one hand, the *Avesta* attributes to him a divine status and leadership in the other world; on the other hand, it portrays him as a mortal creature, deprived of immortality, because he serves as an intermediary between the god Ahura Mazda and humankind.
3. He is not infallible, for his sin consisted in eating the flesh of cattle and shedding the blood of an animal whose killing was forbidden[44]. This led Zoroaster to oppose Yima and to attempt to efface his sanctity from Persian heritage, condemning what Yima had done in introducing the custom of meat-eating among his people. Yet he was unable to uproot these firmly established elements from Persian tradition[45].
4. To all of this may be added further differences in the details of the Myth of Yima, which will be noted when presenting the researcher's observations on the text of the myth.

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that the matter remains open to possibility, and Allah knows best the true state of affairs. Further clarification of this issue will follow.

Having concluded the discussion of the Flood narrative in Zoroastrianism in relation to its possible identification with the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him, the researcher now turns to an analysis of the text of the myth. She will limit herself to presenting observations on the text rather than reproducing it in full, given its length of forty-three passages(46). The explanation is as follows:

1. It is observed that the myth appears in the context of answering Zoroaster's question concerning the first human with whom the god Ahura Mazda spoke, as stated in the text: "Zoroaster asked truthful Ahura Mazda: O Holy Spirit, creator of the material world, with whom did you first speak among mortals other than me, Zoroaster? And to whom did you impart the Ahuric Zoroastrian faith? Ahura Mazda replied: with splendid Yima" (47).
2. The word "Flood" does not occur in this myth. Rather, the myth speaks of a drowning resulting from the melting of snow due to the prolonged duration of winter, as it states: "The waters will drown it as a result of the melting of the deep snows"(48).
3. It may be inferred from the myth that the cause of this winter was a sin committed by humanity, though the myth does not specify its nature, as appears in the text: "Winters shall fall upon this sinful material world" (49).
4. The myth reveals the Zoroastrian belief in anthropomorphism, as it depicts the gods convening an assembly concerning the winter, indicating that the gods are not independent in their decisions.
5. The myth affirms the concept of revelation, that is, communication between the gods and human beings, and this is evident in several instances, including the god Ahura Mazda's commissioning of Yima with the task of conveying the religion.
6. The myth points to the election of its hero, Yima, and his nearness to the supreme god, since he was the first human with whom the deity spoke.
7. The myth also explicitly presents the negative stance of its hero, Yima, toward the deity despite his election, for he refused to undertake the task of proclaiming the religion and abandoned it. This indicates his lack of

infallibility in their belief, as he said: "I am not able, I am not trained to be the disciple and teacher of the faith" (50).

8. The myth suggests that its hero possesses two kingdoms, one earthly and one in the hereafter, implying their belief that he will be a king in the next world.

9. It also indicates the existence of a sacred land, the place where the assembly concerning the winter was held, called *Airyanem Vaejah* (51).

10. The myth states that the Flood occurred on mountain peaks and in the valleys of the river of the god *Ardvī*, which suggests a belief that it was not universal over the entire earth, but rather resulted from the melting of heavy snow in certain lands.

11. The repeated mention of bringing dogs, fire, birds, and cattle into the fortress built by Yima suggests their sanctity in this religion, especially given their role in some rituals.

12. The myth also refers to a mythical bird called *Karshipta* (52), which had a leader who carried the religious message and brought it into Yima's structure, despite Yima's refusal of the task of proclaiming the faith.

13. The myth further states that the god Ahura Mazda supported Yima with supernatural instruments when ordering him to expand the earth whenever it became too narrow for living beings. These were the golden staff and the whip(53). By means of them, he gathered creatures into his enclosure: "He pressed this earth with his golden staff and struck it with the goad … and said: move, expand, that the earth may contain cattle, sheep, and men" (54). It also states: "He gathered them with his golden whip into the vara"(55).

14. The myth indicates that the gods assembled together with its hero Yima and the choicest of creatures, and informed them of the coming winter, as appears in the text: "The creator Ahura Mazda held an assembly with the gods … attended by splendid Yima … and by the best of mortal men" (56).

15. It also states that the gods commanded Yima to construct a building called *vara* [57] in Avestan, an underground refuge intended for the habitation of human beings, cattle, plants, and fire during the winter and the floods.

16. The fortress was built according to a special design in accordance with divine instructions, having nine passages in front, six in the middle, three within, and one window. Its area was estimated at two thousand steps on all four sides. Yima was also commanded to build dwellings within it, and it was made of clay[58].

17. The myth gives details of what Yima brought into the fortress: he introduced one thousand people as a first group, then six hundred, then three hundred. He also brought pairs of animals, including livestock, dogs, cattle, and birds, while excluding the deformed and the sick. He introduced sound plants, cultivated meadows, provisions, blazing fires, and water, so that the fortress might be self-sufficient.

18. Yima was able to expand the earth three times whenever it became too narrow for living beings, until the duration of his kingdom reached nine hundred years, after enlarging it three times by means of the staff and the whip.

19. The myth does not indicate how this event ended with respect to the salvation or destruction of humankind.

20. The myth contains strange and fanciful matters, among them:

a. Reproduction within the fortress occurs only once every forty years, with each pair producing two children, a male and a female. This applies both to humans and animals, as appears in the text: “After forty years, from two human beings there was born a pair, male and female, and likewise among the species of other cattle” [59].

b. There would be in his kingdom neither cold wind nor hot, neither disease nor death, as stated in the text of the myth: “In my kingdom there shall be neither cold wind nor hot, neither disease nor death” [60].

c. A single day in the fortress passed as though it were a year.

The strangeness of these matters, their remoteness from reality, and their closeness to fantasy are self-evident.

21. This myth does not correspond exactly to the Flood stories commonly known among nations, and some researchers[61] have interpreted it as the story of the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him, because of the resemblance. It is therefore useful to clarify the similarities and differences between the two narratives:

First: Points of Similarity:

a. Yima is portrayed as one close to the deity, being the first human with whom the god spoke and the first entrusted with the mission of conveying the message and religion. Likewise, our master Noah, peace be upon him, was the first messenger sent by Allah the Exalted to the people of the earth and was chosen from among the prophets.

b. The duration of Yima's kingdom reached nine hundred years, whereas the period of our master Noah's mission, peace be upon him, reached nine hundred and fifty years.

c. The warning concerning the winter came from the deity, and the cause of its occurrence was sin and wrongdoing. Likewise, the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him, came by revelation from Allah the Exalted, and its cause was denial and disbelief.

d. Yima was commanded to build a refuge to protect himself from the severe winter according to divine instruction, and to bring into it pairs of creatures and all that was needed. This resembles the command given to our master Noah, peace be upon him, to build an ark for salvation from the Flood, and Allah also commanded him to carry therein pairs of every kind.

Second: Points of Difference:

a. Yima refused the mission of conveying the religion, whereas our master Noah, peace be upon him, fulfilled his mission of proclamation.

b. The event in the myth is described as a severe winter, whereas in the story of our master Noah, peace be upon him, it is a Flood.

c. Yima was endowed with supernatural instruments that aided him in multiplying living beings and expanding the earth whenever it became too narrow before the onset of winter. Nothing of these miraculous features is reported concerning our master Noah, peace be upon him.

d. Yima's structure, which was an underground refuge built according to measured dimensions, differed in nature from the ark of our master Noah, peace be upon him, whose dimensions were not known in the same way.

e. Yima possessed two kingdoms, and those kingdoms were marked by supernatural qualities.

After this presentation of the Zoroastrian myth, the following important conclusions may be drawn:

1. Persian, or more broadly Aryan, heritage contained a number of myths and narratives that became intertwined and mixed together, and the story of the Flood of our master Noah, peace be upon him, was one manifestation of this overlap.
2. The Persians did not explicitly mention our master Noah, peace be upon him. Rather, most of what is reported concerning him appears only by way of comparison, without firm confirmation.
3. The Myth of Yima was not originally Zoroastrian, even though it reinforced certain Zoroastrian beliefs, as has been shown above.

2 - SECTION TWO: THE FLOOD IN MITHRAISM

2.1 - First Subsection: An Introduction to Mithraism

First: Origin of the Name:

The Mithraic religion derives its name from *Mithra* [(62)], who is regarded as one of the most famous deities of the Aryan tribes in ancient India prior to the appearance of the Mithraists in Persia and among the Romans[(63)].

Second: Religious Authority and Historical Emergence:

It should first be noted that the worship of *Mithra* was transmitted to India through the migration of the Aryan tribes from their original homeland in Europe. This occurred before the transfer of Mithra worship to Persia and to the Romans[(64)], and before the emergence of Mithraism as a religion. In other words, the claim of Mithra's divinity has ancient roots that predate the rise of his religion.

The Mithraic religion spread after Zoroastrianism in Persia and among the Romans, and it rivaled Christianity in its expansion. This led to bitter conflict between the two religions until Christianity overpowered Mithraism by force of law in the fourth century CE(65).

The earliest historical record in which the god Mithra is mentioned dates to the fourteenth century BCE and was discovered in the northern plains of Anatolia(66). The researcher, however, cannot state with certainty whether this record belongs to the Mithraists themselves or to those who preceded them among the Indians or the Persians.

The Mithraists had no sacred scriptures, nor works of literature or epics that might reveal the details of their religion.

Nevertheless, Mithra is mentioned prior to Mithraism in the Zoroastrian sacred scripture, the *Avesta*, where a special section is devoted to him called *Mihr Yasht*, meaning the Hymn of Mithra. In this section, Mithra appears in the fullness of the sanctity attributed to him by the Aryan tribes in India(67).

A number of archaeological remains connected with Mithraism have also appeared, though they do not amount to a complete theory concerning its origin. They have also given rise to scholarly controversy, as researchers have differed over whether its origin lies in India, Persia, or the Roman world(68).

There is, however, no doubt that this religion belongs among the Persian religions, despite the lack of clarity regarding its place of origin.

Third: Doctrines of This Religion:

The Mithraic religion is founded upon polytheism. Its adherents believe that the gods are divided into two groups: deities of nature and deities of human society, and Mithra is regarded as one of the gods of the second group(69).

They believe that Mithra is the god of the sun, and they also believe that he is the god of covenants, responsible for overseeing treaties and pacts among the ancient Aryan tribes. He is also entrusted with other functions, such as aiding the righteous and combating the wicked, especially the evil spirit *Ahriman*(70).

They also believe that Mithra will appear at the end of time, destroy the wicked by fire, and save the righteous and the virtuous [71].

Fourth: Rituals, Laws, and Religious Practices:

Among the most prominent rituals of the Mithraic religion is baptism, through which the Mithraist is cleansed from sins. This rite is obligatory for all Mithraists. They also have a sacred supper in which they eat bread and drink wine as an offering to their god Mithra[72].

They likewise possess an ethical system founded on choosing the path of good and ridding oneself of evil and sin. They arranged ethics into five ranks, all of which revolve around combating evil, and Mithra occupies the highest rank in this moral hierarchy because of his triumph over evil [73].

2.2 - Second Subsection: Analysis of the Flood Narrative in Mithraism

Before presenting the myth, two points should be noted:

First: based on the sources consulted by the researcher, the origin and date of this myth remain unclear. It has not become evident whether it goes back to the earliest appearance of Mithra worship among the Aryan tribes in India, or whether it belongs instead to the period when his worship was transferred to Persia or to the Romans.

Second: there is no known material evidence attesting to this narrative. The researcher did not find the story in their religious or popular traditions; all the information she found concerning the story consists only of scattered fragments in books and extremely scarce information in contemporary sources, as will become clear, God willing.

Accordingly, the researcher relied in studying this myth on two late sources. The first is *Allah* by al-ʿAqqād, and the second is *Man and His God* by Smith.

The following is the text cited by al-ʿAqqād: “Ahriman warred against him, pursued him with cunning, and frustrated every work of goodness and prosperity that he undertook. Mithra then sent upon the earth a flood that submerged it, and none survived except a single man, who carried his family and his livestock in a small boat and thereafter renewed upon the earth the life of humankind and animals. Then he purified the earth by fire, partook

with the angels of good in a farewell meal, and ascended to heaven, where he remains, guiding the righteous and assisting them in escaping the snares of Satan" [74].

As for what Smith[75] mentions concerning the myth, it may be regarded as an addition to what al-ʿAqqād reported. He states that Ahriman fought Mithra through several means, among them drought, flood, and fire. When he sought to unleash drought, Mithra resisted and overcame it in a miraculous way, shooting an arrow at a rock so that it split from the force of the arrow and water gushed forth from it wondrously. As for the flood, Mithra confronted it by saving a man together with his cattle in an ark. As for the fire, none survived it except the good creatures.

Finally, Mithra triumphed over Ahriman, and as a result of this victory ascended to heaven, came to possess its keys, and became an intermediary between the god Ahura Mazda and humankind[76].

The following observations may be made regarding this myth:

1. The basic idea of the myth is founded on the belief in the triumph of the gods of the forces of good over the gods of the forces of evil. Yet this victory is not final, since Mithra continued after the flood to seek to rescue humankind from the snares of Satan.
2. The flood is presented as a result of the conflict between the evil spirit Ahriman and the god Mithra.
3. The myth affirms polytheistic and pagan beliefs, for it portrays Mithra as possessing a nature that combines human and divine attributes. He was in continual war with Ahriman, served as an intermediary between the deity and humankind, and at the same time was the god of the sun and of covenants.
4. The myth also confirms certain Mithraic rituals which Mithra performed after the flood, such as purifying the earth by fire and partaking of the farewell meal.
5. Owing to the paucity of information concerning the myth, the researcher was unable to determine the name of the person who survived the flood, the reason for his being chosen for salvation rather than others, whether

the flood encompassed the whole earth or was confined to part of it, or any details concerning the ark or its passengers.

In sum, the researcher cannot state with certainty that this narrative is sound or free from conflation with other myths, since the available data concerning it are not dependable.

And Allah is the granter of success.

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(1) See: al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa-al-Niḥal (pp. 277, 281).
(2) See: al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab (1:175), and al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa-al-Niḥal (pp. 281, 283).
(3) See: Bāqir, Muqaddimah fī Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍārāt al-Qadīmah (2:471).
(4) See: the previous source (2:474).
(5) See: the previous source (2:471), and Eliade, A Dictionary of Religion (p. 220).
(6) See: al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab (1:175), and al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ishrāf, by the same author (p. 80).
(7) See: Avesta: introduction to the first nask, by the translator (p. 55), and (p. 209); introduction to the third nask, by the translator (p. 231); introduction to the fourth nask, by the translator (p. 387); introduction to the Khordeh Avesta, by the translator (p. 709); and al-Ḥāyik, Abastāq (p. 17).
(8) See: al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab (1:175), and al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ishrāf, by the same author (pp. 80, 85).
(9) See: Avesta: translator's introduction (p. 45), note (p. 98), and al-Masʿūdī, al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ishrāf (p. 81).
(10) See: al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa-al-Niḥal (pp. 277–278, 281, 283), and Imām, Muʿjam Diyānāt wa-Asāṭīr al-ʿĀlam (3:489). It should be noted that post-Zoroasterian Zoroastrianism made light itself Ahura Mazda, and did not believe in His transcendence over "light" and "darkness," thus taking on a purely dualistic form. See: Zaehner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism (pp. 44, 47, 53–54).
(11) See: Avesta: translator's introduction (p. 8), and (pp. 172, 192); introduction to the fourth nask, by the translator (p. 387); preface to Yasht 5, by the translator (p. 408); preface to Yasht 6, by the translator (p. 432); the Yasht itself (p. 434); and introduction to Yasht 10, by the translator (p. 457).
(12) He is also called (Vīshdād). Miskawayh states in Tajārib al-Umam wa-Taʿāqub al-Himam (1:51–52) that he was virtuous, commendable in conduct, sound in governance, expelled corrupt people from the lands, brought near the righteous, and managed affairs well. He descended to India and then traveled through various lands.
(13) He is also called (Ṭahmūrat). Miskawayh mentions that he was among the descendants of Ūshahank, with several forefathers between them, and that he followed the conduct of his grandfather, so the order of the kingdom remained in a state of general righteousness. He was the first to write in Persian. See: the previous source (1:52).
(14) See: al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa-al-Niḥal (p. 282). He is Yima, the hero of their Flood myth, who will be discussed in the next subsection.
(15) See: al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab (1:175), al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa-al-Niḥal (pp. 281, 283), and al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:87).
(16) See: Avesta: note (p. 84).
(17) See: the previous source: preface to Yasht 6, by the translator (p. 432); the Yasht itself (p. 434); and al-Ḥāyik, Abastāq (p. 22).
(18) See: Avesta (p. 349).

(19) By "eternity" they mean after 3,000 years from the birth of Zoroaster. See: Avesta: note (p. 254).
(20) See: Eliade, A Dictionary of Religion (p. 231).
(21) See: Avesta: note (pp. 106, 361).
(22) See: al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab (1:170).
(23) See: al-Masʿūdī, Akhbār al-Zamān (p. 100); Murūj al-Dhahab, by the same author (1:168); and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh (1:67).
(24) See: Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh (1:67).
(25) See: al-Qannūjī, Luqṭat al-ʿAjlān (p. 97).
(26) These are: the sacred scripture of Zoroastrianism (Avesta); al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab and al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ishrāf; al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah; Miskawayh, Tajārib al-Umam; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh; al-Qannūjī, Luqṭat al-ʿAjlān mimmā tamassu ilā Maʿrifatihi Ḥājat al-Insān; Horn, Ancient Persian Literature; Browne, A Literary History of Persia; Eliade, A Dictionary of Religion; and others.
(27) See: Avesta: introduction to the third nask, by the translator (p. 231).
(28) See: the previous source (p. 247).
(29) There are several opinions regarding the duration of his rule, including that he ruled for 333 years, and that he ruled for 762 years. See: al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (p. 122), and al-Bīrūnī, al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah (pp. 119, 121–124).
(30) See: al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:23).
(31) See: Zaehner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism (pp. 163–164).
(32) See: Avesta (pp. 131, 244–246).
(33) See: the previous source: note (pp. 68, 131), and al-Firdawsī, introduction to the Shāhnāmah (1:73).
(34) See: al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:23–24, 37, 39), and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh (1:77).
(35) al-Bīrūnī, al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah (p. 149).
(36) See: al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:13).
(37) Miskawayh, Tajārib al-Umam (1:97).
(38) See: al-Masʿūdī, al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ishrāf (p. 77), and al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:41).
(39) See: al-Bīrūnī, al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah (pp. 119, 122, 124).
(40) See: al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:23–24).
(41) al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab (1:168).
(42) See: al-Firdawsī, introduction to the Shāhnāmah (1:73).
(43) See: Avesta: note (pp. 68, 131, 727); al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:21); and Miskawayh, Tajārib al-Umam (1:53).
(44) See: Avesta: preface to the Myth of Yima, by the translator (pp. 240–245); and Avesta Akthar min Kiyān, commentary by Ibrāhīm Maḥmūd (pp. 625–626, 629).
(45) See: the previous source (pp. 68–69), and Zaehner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism (pp. 157, 159–160, 163, 169).
(46) For the full text, see: Avesta (pp. 247–252).
(47) The previous source (p. 247).
(48) The previous source (p. 249).

([49]) The previous source (p. 249).
([50]) The previous source (p. 247).
([51]) In Zoroastrian belief, (Airyanem Vaejah) is one of the sacred lands created by the deity at the beginning of creation, in which Zoroaster lived. It is consistently mentioned in the Avesta in connection with the offering of sacrifices, and it corresponds to present-day Khwarazm or Tajikistan. See: the previous source: preface to the geographical hymn, by the translator (pp. 232–233), and (pp. 412, 426, 455).
([52]) It should be noted that birds occupy an exalted place in the religion and mythology of the Persians. See: al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:57).
([53]) It should also be noted that the staff holds a great place in Zoroastrianism, being regarded as a principal necessity in the governance of the cosmos, and of the earth in particular. For this reason, they believe that whoever does not possess a staff cannot possibly undertake any responsible task. See: Avesta: Avesta Akthar min Kiyān, commentary by Ibrāhīm Maḥmūd (pp. 630–631).
([54]) The previous source (p. 248).
([55]) The previous source (p. 252).
([56]) The previous source (p. 249).
([57]) The vara is a pit or an imaginary underground refuge. See: the previous source: note (pp. 236, 250), and Zaehner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism (p. 158).
([58]) The translator of the Avesta mentions several interpretations regarding the shape of Yima's structure, including that it was built in the form of a square, and that it was circular. See: (p. 250).
([59]) The previous source (p. 252), and see: al-Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah (1:22).
([60]) Avesta (p. 247).
([61]) See: the previous source (pp. 131, 244–246), and Maẓhar, The Story of the Flood (p. 76).
([62]) It should be noted that the name Mithra appears in books in several forms, including: Mithra, Mitra, and Metra. Accordingly, the religion has also been referred to by several forms, including: al-Mithrāʾiyyah, al-Mīthrāwiyyah, al-Mathrāwiyyah, al-Mitrīyah, al-Matrīyah, al-Mathriyyah, al-Mitrāwiyyah, and al-Mītrāniyyah. See: ʿAjībah, Dirāsāt fī al-Adyān al-Wathaniyyah al-Qadīmah (p. 123); Migolevsky, Asrār al-Ālihah wa-al-Diyānāt (p. 87); al-ʿAqqād, Allah (p. 95); Barandar and Nos, "Zoroastrianism," in al-Sawwāḥ's Tārīkh al-Adyān (5:20); al-Ḥāyik, Abastāq (pp. 30–31); and ʿAzīz, al-Madkhal ilā al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd (p. 68).
([63]) See: al-Nadwī, al-Hind al-Qadīmah (p. 77).
([64]) See: the previous source (pp. 77–78); Migolevsky, Asrār al-Ālihah wa-al-Diyānāt (p. 87); al-ʿAqqād, Allah (p. 95); and ʿAzīz, al-Madkhal ilā al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd (p. 69).
([65]) See: Migolevsky, Asrār al-Ālihah wa-al-Diyānāt (p. 90), and ʿAzīz, al-Madkhal ilā al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd (p. 68).
([66]) See: Avesta: translator's introduction (p. 457). It should be noted that researchers have differed regarding the dating of these remains. Some hold that the

earliest discovery dates to the sixteenth century BCE, while others maintain that it goes back to the fourth millennium BCE. For further detail, see: ʿAjībah, Dirāsāt fī al-Adyān al-Wathaniyyah al-Qadīmah (p. 119); Migolevsky, Asrār al-Ālihah wa-al-Diyānāt (p. 87); al-Ḥāyik, Abastāq (p. 30); and ʿAzīz, al-Madkhal ilā al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd (p. 69).

(67) See: Avesta: translator's introduction (p. 457), and (pp. 459–486); and al-Nadwī, al-Hind al-Qadīmah (p. 78).

(68) See: Migolevsky, Asrār al-Ālihah wa-al-Diyānāt (pp. 87–90), al-ʿAqqād, Allah (p. 94), Brandon, Mithraism and Its Challenge to Christianity (p. 108), and Hopfe, Archaeological Indications on the Origins of Roman Mithraism (pp. 16–17).

(69) See: ʿAzīz, al-Madkhal ilā al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd (p. 69).

(70) See: Avesta: introduction to Yasht 10, by the translator (p. 457); al-Nadwī, al-Hind al-Qadīmah (p. 78); and al-ʿAqqād, Allah (p. 95).

(71) See: Barandar and Nos, "Zoroastrianism," in al-Sawwāḥ's Tārīkh al-Adyān (5:19).

(72) In these rituals there appears a resemblance between Mithraism and Christianity. See: Migolevsky, Asrār al-Ālihah wa-al-Diyānāt (p. 88).

(73) See: the previous source (p. 88).

(74) al-ʿAqqād, Allah (p. 95).

(75) William Homer Smith was born in 1895. He was an American from Denver, Colorado, and a doctor specializing in physiology. He taught medicine at New York University. Among his works are: From Fish to Philosopher and The Kidney: Structure and Function in Health and Disease. He died in 1962 in New York City. See: Bynum, "Smith, Homer William," American National Biography Online (p. 486); Giebisch, "Homer W. Smith's Contribution to Renal Physiology" (pp. 159–165); Pitts, Homer William Smith: A Biographical Memoir, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C. (p. 244).

(76) See: Smith, Man and His Gods (pp. 102–103).