

Strong's Concordance

zebul: elevation, height, lofty abode

Original Word: זְבוּל

Part of Speech: Noun Masculine

Transliteration: zebul

Phonetic Spelling: (ze-bool')

Short Definition: habitation

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Definition

elevation, height, lofty abode

<http://biblehub.com/hebrew/2073.htm>

Zebul (“habitation,” “temple”)—an angel who shares the rule of the 6th Heaven with Sabath—Zebul ruling by night, Sabath by day. However, Zebul is also a designation for the 3rd Heaven (as in *Visions of Ezekiel*) and a designation for the 4th Heaven (as in *3 Enoch* and *Talmud Hagiga* 12b.)

Gustav Davidson. *A Dictionary of Angels: Including the Fallen Angels*. New York: The Free Press. 1967. Page 327.

Heaven

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Heaven, the **Heavens** or Seven Heavens, is a common religious, cosmological or transcendent place from which heavenly beings (such as a God, angels, the jinn, and sky deities like King or Queen of Heaven, Heavenly Father, Heavenly Mother, Son of Heaven, heavenly saints or venerated ancestors) originate, are enthroned or inhabit. It is commonly believed that heavenly beings can descend to earth or incarnate and that earthly beings can ascend to Heaven in the afterlife or, in exceptional cases, enter Heaven alive.

Heaven is often described as a "higher place", the holiest place, a Paradise, in contrast to Hell or the Underworld or the "low places", and universally or conditionally accessible by earthly beings according to various standards of divinity, goodness, piety, faith, or other virtues or right beliefs or simply the Will of God. Some believe in the possibility of a Heaven on Earth in a World to Come.

Another belief is in an Axis mundi or World tree which connects the heavens, the world, and the underworld. In Indian religions, Heaven is considered as *Svarga loka*, and soul is again subjected to rebirth in different living forms according to its *karma*. This cycle can be broken after a soul achieves *Moksha* or *Nirvana*. Any place of existence, either of humans, souls or deities, outside the tangible world (heaven, hell or other) is called *otherworld*.



Dante and Beatrice gaze upon the highest heavens; from Gustave Doré's illustrations to the *Divine Comedy*.

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Etymology

The modern English word *heaven* is derived from the earlier (Middle English) *heven* (attested 1159); this in turn was developed from the previous Old English form *heofon*. By c. 1000, *heofon* was being used in reference to the Christianized "place where God dwells", but originally, it had signified "sky, firmament"^[1] (e.g. in *Beowulf*, c. 725). The English term has cognates in the other Germanic languages: Old Saxon *heþan* "sky, heaven", Middle Low German *heven* "sky", Old Icelandic *himinn* "sky, heaven", Gothic *himins*; and those with a variant final *-l*: Old Frisian *himel*, *himul* "sky, heaven", Old Saxon/Old High German *himil*, Dutch *hemel*, and modern German *Himmel*. All of these have been derived from a reconstructed Proto-Germanic form **Hemina-*.^[2] In

many languages, the word for "heaven" is the same as the word for "sky".

Entry into heaven

Religions that speak about heaven differ on how (and if) one gets into it, either in the afterlife or while still alive. In many religions, entrance to heaven is conditional on having lived a "good life" (within the terms of the spiritual system). Some religions uphold the belief that other forms of afterlife exist in addition to heaven and hell, such as purgatory, though many hells, such as Naraka, serve as purgatories themselves. Some belief systems contain universalism, the belief that everyone will go to heaven eventually, no matter what they have done or believed on earth. Some forms of Christianity and other religions believe hell to be the termination of the soul.

Ancient Near East religions

Assyria

Egypt

In Ancient Egyptian faith, belief in an afterlife is much more stressed than in ancient Judaism. Heaven was a physical place far above the Earth in a "dark area" of space where there were no stars, basically beyond the Universe. According to the Book of the Dead, departed souls would undergo a literal journey to reach Heaven, along the way to which there could exist hazards and other entities attempting to deny the reaching of Heaven. Their heart would finally be weighed with the feather of truth, and if the sins weighed it down their heart was devoured.

Canaanite and Phoenician views of heaven

Almost nothing is known of Bronze Age (pre-1200 BC) Canaanite views of heaven, and the archeological findings at Ugarit (destroyed c. 1200 BC) have not provided information. The 1st century Greek author Philo of Byblos may preserve elements of Iron Age Phoenician religion in his *Sanchuniathon*.^[3]

Hurrian and Hittite myths

In the Middle Hittite myths heaven is the abode of the gods. In the Song of Kumarbi, Alalu was king in heaven for nine years before giving birth to his son Anu. Anu was himself overthrown by his son Kumarbi.^[4] ^[5]^[6]^[7]

Judaism (Iron Age)

The term for heavens in the Tanakh is *shamayim*, located above the firmament (a solid, transparent dome which covered the earth and separated it from the "waters" above). The God of Israel (Yahweh) lived in Heaven or in the "Heaven of Heavens" (the exact difference between these two, if any, is unclear) in a heavenly palace. His dwelling on earth was Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, which was a model of the cosmos and included a section which represented Heaven.

Christianity

In the "sola fide" belief of many mainstream Protestant Christians, one does not have to live a perfectly "good life", but one must accept (believe and put faith in) Jesus Christ as one's saviour, and then Jesus Christ will assume the guilt of one's sins; believers are believed to be forgiven regardless of any good or bad "works" they have done.^[9] Catholic Christians too speak of heaven as unattainable by even heroic human effort and having been "opened" instead by the death and resurrection of Jesus.^[10] They see heaven as "God's eternal reward for good works accomplished with the grace of Christ" and giving rise to no strict merit on the part of human beings,^[11] while "the works of the flesh" exclude from heaven.^[12] For the Orthodox too, "free will and our cooperation with God is *always* understood to be an act of grace"^[13] Christian Universalism, on the other hand, holds that, because of divine love and mercy, all will ultimately be reconciled to God, regardless of present faith or good deeds. Some Christian denominations believe in an Intermediate state between death and the Resurrection of the Dead.

Christianity is based on the biblical belief in heaven as the Throne of God.^[14] To this is added the belief that grace enables believers to ascend to heaven, as exemplified by Elijah and Enoch,^[15] and to which all the elect will be admitted.^[16] The First Book of Maccabees (part of the Deuterocanonals) uses "Heaven" as a name for God, but the spatial metaphor does not identify God with heaven, which is incapable of containing God.^[15]

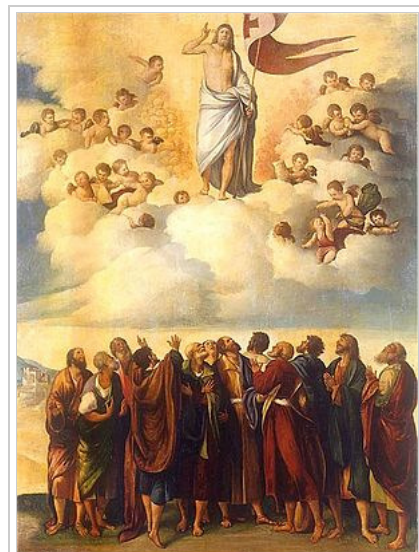
Credal beliefs about heaven are expressed in the Nicene Creed, such as belief in the Ascension of Jesus to heaven and the Session of Christ at the Right Hand of God, and in the belief in the Second Coming of Christ from heaven to earth. Credal beliefs about the afterlife include the statement: "I look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come".

Catholic beliefs about Mary include that she was assumed into heaven and titled the Queen of Heaven. In addition it is believed that St. Peter was given the Keys of Heaven, derived from Matthew 16:18-19 (<http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Matthew&verse=16:18-19&src=!>).

The Gospel of Matthew frequently uses the phrase "kingdom of heaven", where the other Synoptic Gospels speak of the "kingdom of God", one of the key elements of the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament.^[17] Revelation 12:7-9 (<http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Revelation&verse=12:7-9&src=ESV>) speaks of a war in heaven between Michael the Archangel and his angels against the Dragon and his angels, after which the Dragon and his angels are "thrown down to the earth".

In the 2nd century AD, Irenaeus of Lyons recorded a belief that, in accordance with John 14:2 (<http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=John&verse=14:2&src=!>), those who in the afterlife see the Saviour are in different mansions, some dwelling in the heavens, others in paradise and others in "the city".^[18]

While the word used in all these writings, in particular the New Testament Greek word οὐρανός (*ouranos*), applies primarily to the sky, it is also used metaphorically of the dwelling place of God and the blessed.^{[19][20][21]} Similarly, though the English word "heaven" still keeps its original physical meaning when used, for instance, in allusions to the stars as "lights shining through from heaven", and in phrases such as heavenly body to mean an astronomical object, the heaven or happiness that Christianity looks forward to "is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity. It is our



The Ascension, by Dosso Dossi, 16th century. Many ascension scenes have an upper (heavenly) and a lower (earthly) part.^[8]

meeting with the Father which takes place in the risen Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit."^[15]

Judaism

Rabbinical Judaism

While the concept of heaven (*malkuth hashamaim* מלכות השמים, the Kingdom of Heaven) is well-defined within the Christian and Islamic religions, the Jewish concept of the afterlife, sometimes known as *olam haba*, the World-to-come, is not so precise. The Torah has little to say on the subject of survival after death, but by the time of the rabbis two ideas had made inroads among the Jews: one, which is probably derived from Greek thought,^[22] is that of the immortal soul which returns to its creator after death; the other, which is thought to be of Persian origin,^[22] is that of resurrection of the dead.

Jewish writings refer to a "new earth" as the abode of mankind following the resurrection of the dead. Originally, the two ideas of immortality and resurrection were different but in rabbinic thought they are combined: the soul departs from the body at death but is returned to it at the resurrection. This idea is linked to another rabbinic teaching, that men's good and bad actions are rewarded and punished not in this life but after death, whether immediately or at the subsequent resurrection.^[22] Around 1 CE, the Pharisees are said to have maintained belief in resurrection but the Sadducees are said to have denied it (Matt. 22:23).

Some scholars assert that the Sheol mentioned in Isaiah 38:18, Psalm 6:5 and Job 7:7-10 was an earlier concept than Heaven, but this theory is not universally held.

The Mishnah has many sayings about the World to Come, for example, "Rabbi Yaakov said: This world is like a lobby before the World to Come; prepare yourself in the lobby so that you may enter the banquet hall."^[23]

Judaism holds that the righteous of all nations have a share in the World-to-come.^[24]

According to Nicholas de Lange, Judaism offers no clear teaching about the destiny which lies in wait for the individual after death and its attitude to life after death has been expressed as follows: "For the future is inscrutable, and the accepted sources of knowledge, whether experience, or reason, or revelation, offer no clear guidance about what is to come. The only certainty is that each man must die - beyond that we can only guess."^[22]

According to Tracey R. Rich of the website "Judaism 101", Judaism, unlike other world-religions, is not focused on the quest of getting into heaven but on life and how to live it.^[25]

Kabbalah Jewish mysticism

In order from lowest to highest, the Seven Heavens, Shamayim (שמים), according to the Talmud, are listed alongside the angels who govern them:^{[26][27]}

1. **Vilon** (וילון) also called "**Araphel**": The first Heaven, governed by Archangel Gabriel, is the closest of heavenly realms to the Earth; it is also considered the abode of Adam and Eve.
2. **Raqi'a** (רקיע): The second Heaven is dually controlled by Zachariel and Raphael. It was in this Heaven that Moses, during his visit to Paradise, encountered the angel Nuriel who stood "300 parasangs high,

with a retinue of 50 myriads of angels all fashioned out of water and fire". Also, Raquia is considered the realm where the fallen angels are imprisoned and the planets fastened.^[28]

3. **Shehaqim** (שְׁחַקִּים): The third Heaven, under the leadership of Anahel, serves as the home of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life; it is also the realm where manna, the holy food of angels, is produced.^[29] The *Second Book of Enoch*, meanwhile, states that both Paradise and Hell are accommodated in Shehaqim with Hell being located simply "on the northern side".
4. **Ma'on** (מַעוֹן): The fourth Heaven is ruled by the Archangel Michael, and according to Talmud Hagiga 12, it contains the heavenly Jerusalem, the Temple, and the Altar.
5. **Makhon** (מַכּוֹן): The fifth Heaven is under the administration of Samael, an angel referred to as evil by some, but who is to others merely a dark servant of God.
6. **Zebul** (זְבוּל): The sixth Heaven falls under the jurisdiction of Sachiel.
7. **Araboth** (עַרְבוֹת): The seventh Heaven, under the leadership of Cassiel, is the holiest of the seven Heavens because it houses the Throne of Glory attended by the Seven Archangels and serves as the realm in which God dwells; underneath the throne itself lies the abode of all unborn human souls. It is also considered the home of the Seraphim, the Cherubim, and the Hayyoth.^[30]

Islam

The Qur'an contains many references to an afterlife in Eden for those who do good deeds. Regarding the concept of heaven (Jannah) in the Qu'ran, verse 35 of Surah Al-Ra'd says, "The parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised! Beneath it flow rivers. Perpetual is the fruits thereof and the shade therein. Such is the End of the Righteous; and the end of the unbelievers is the Fire."^[Quran 13:35 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/013-qmt.php#013.035>)] Islam rejects the concept of original sin, and Muslims believe that all human beings are born pure. Children automatically go to heaven when they die, regardless of the religion of their parents.

The concept of heaven in Islam differs in many respects to the concept in Judaism and Christianity. Heaven is described primarily in physical terms as a place where every wish is immediately fulfilled when asked. Islamic texts describe immortal life in heaven as happy, without negative emotions. Those who dwell in heaven are said to wear costly apparel, partake in exquisite banquets, and recline on couches inlaid with gold or precious stones. Inhabitants will rejoice in the company of their parents, wives, and children. In Islam if one's good deeds weigh out one's sins then one may gain entrance to heaven. Conversely, if one's sins outweigh their good deeds they are sent to hell. The more good deeds one has performed the higher the level of heaven one is directed to. It has been said that the lowest level of heaven is one-hundred times better than the greatest life on earth. The highest level is the seventh heaven. Palaces are built by angels for the occupants using solid gold.

Verses which describe heaven include: Quran 13:35 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/013-qmt.php#013.035>), Quran 18:31 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/018-qmt.php#018.031>), Quran 38:49–54 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/038-qmt.php#038.049>), Quran 35:33–35 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/035-qmt.php#035.033>), Quran 52:17–27 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/052-qmt.php#052.017>).

Islamic texts refer to several levels of heaven: Firdaus or Paradise, 'Adn, Na'iim, Ma'wa, Darussalaam, Daarul

Muaqaamah, Al-Muqqamul, Amin & Khuldi.

Ahmadiyya

According to the Ahmadiyya view, much of the imagery presented in the Qur'an regarding heaven, but also hell, is in fact metaphorical. They propound the verse which describes, according to them how the life to come after death is very different from the life here on earth. The Quran says: "From bringing in your place others like you, and from developing you into a form which at present you know not."^[Quran 56:62 (http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/056-qmt.php#056.062)] According to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of Ahmadiyya sect in Islam, the soul will give birth to another rarer entity and will resemble the life on this earth in the sense that this entity will bear a similar relationship to the soul, as the soul bears relationship with the human existence on earth. On earth, if a person leads a righteous life and submits to the will of God, his or her tastes become attuned to enjoying spiritual pleasures as opposed to carnal desires. With this, an "embryonic soul" begins to take shape. Different tastes are said to be born which a person given to carnal passions finds no enjoyment. For example, sacrifice of one's own's rights over that of other's becomes enjoyable, or that forgiveness becomes second nature. In such a state a person finds contentment and Peace at heart and at this stage, according to Ahmadiyya beliefs, it can be said that a soul within the soul has begun to take shape.^[31]

Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith regards the conventional description of heaven (and hell) as a specific place as symbolic. The Bahá'í writings describe heaven as a "spiritual condition" where closeness to God is defined as heaven; conversely hell is seen as a state of remoteness from God. Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, has stated that the nature of the life of the soul in the afterlife is beyond comprehension in the physical plane, but has stated that the soul will retain its consciousness and individuality and remember its physical life; the soul will be able to recognize other souls and communicate with them.^[32]

For Bahá'ís, entry into the next life has the potential to bring great joy.^[32] Bahá'u'lláh likened death to the process of birth. He explains: "The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother."^[33] The analogy to the womb in many ways summarizes the Bahá'í view of earthly existence: just as the womb constitutes an important place for a person's initial physical development, the physical world provides for the development of the individual soul. Accordingly, Bahá'ís view life as a preparatory stage, where one can develop and perfect those qualities which will be needed in the next life.^[32] The key to spiritual progress is to follow the path outlined by the current Manifestation of God, which Bahá'ís believe is currently Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "Know thou, of a truth, that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved."^[34]

The Bahá'í teachings state that there exists a hierarchy of souls in the afterlife, where the merits of each soul determines their place in the hierarchy, and that souls lower in the hierarchy cannot completely understand the station of those above. Each soul can continue to progress in the afterlife, but the soul's development is not entirely dependent on its own conscious efforts, the nature of which we are not aware, but also augmented by the grace of God, the prayers of others, and good deeds performed by others on Earth in the name of that person.^[32]

Buddhism

In Buddhism there are several heavens, all of which are still part of *samsara* (illusionary reality). Those who accumulate good karma may be reborn^[35] in one of them. However, their stay in the heaven is not eternal—eventually they will use up their good karma and will undergo a different rebirth into another realm, as humans, animals or other beings. Because heaven is temporary and part of *samsara*, Buddhists focus more on escaping the cycle of rebirth and reaching enlightenment (*Nirvana*). Nirvana is not a heaven but a mental state.

There are several different types of heavens also based on how the human lives a life along career lines. It is declared that a warrior who fights for good, and dies for his or her duties will enter the realm of the "devas of passionate delight", while an actor that makes audiences laugh will enter the realm of the "laughing devas".^[36]

According to Buddhist cosmology the universe is impermanent and beings transmigrate through a number of existential "planes" in which this human world is only one "realm" or "path".^[37]

These are traditionally envisioned as a vertical continuum with the heavens existing above the human realm, and the realms of the animals, Hungry ghosts and hell beings existing beneath it. According to Jan Chozen Bays in her book, *Jizo: Guardian of Children, Travelers, and Other Voyagers*, the realm of the *asura* is a later refinement of the heavenly realm and was inserted between the human realm and the heavens. One important Buddhist heaven is the *Trāyastriṃśa*, which resembles Olympus of Greek mythology.

In the Mahayana world view, there are also pure lands which lie outside this continuum and are created by the Buddhas upon attaining enlightenment. These should not be confused with the heavens as the pure lands are abodes of Buddhas, which the heavens are not and heavens are looked at "impermanent" places to be reincarnated in, as heavenly beings still have to die and be reincarnated into lower realms. This confusion can be made worse when writers use such words "paradise" to denote such pure lands.

One notable Buddhist pure land is the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. Rebirth in the pure land of Amitabha is seen as an assurance of Buddhahood for once reborn there, beings do not fall back into cyclical existence unless they choose to do so to save other beings, the goal of Buddhism being the obtainment of enlightenment and freeing oneself and others from the birth–death cycle.

One of the Buddhist Sutras states that a hundred years of our existence is equal to one day and one night in the world of the thirty-three gods. Thirty such days add up to their one month. Twelve such months become their one year, while they live for a thousand such years though existence in the heavens is ultimately finite and the beings who reside there will reappear in other realms based on their karma.

The Tibetan word *Bardo* means literally "intermediate state". In Sanskrit the concept has the name *antarabhāva*.

Different heavens

According to *Anguttara Nikaya*

Brahmāloka

Here the denizens are Brahmās, and the ruler is Mahābrahmā.

Of all the devas, Brahmās are the wisest of all gods and declared in Buddhism to be the highest but the Buddha and monks having reached the state of Arahant can surpass the Brahmās by status. Brahmās also are asexual and do not desire to procreate.

After developing the four Brahmavihāras, King Makhādeva rebirths here after death. The monk Tissa and

Brāhmana Jānussoni were also reborn here.

For a monk, the next best thing to Nirvana is to be reborn in this Brahmāloka.

The lifespan of a Brahmās is not stated but is not eternal.

Kāmāvacaraloka

The lifespan of a Kāmāvacara is not stated but is not eternal.

Cātummaharaja

Here some denizens are kings that came from human lives as being kings.

The *Anguttara Nikaya* says that on the 15th day, the Cātummaharaja gods look down to earth and see of the humans are still paying reverence to mother, father, samanas and brahmanas.

Bimbisāra (the king of Magadha), and Pāyāsi (the king of Kosāla) were reborn here.

The denizens here have a lifespan of 9,216,000,000 years.

Nimmānarati

The denizens here have a lifespan of 2,284,000,000 years.

Parinimmitavasavatti

The denizens here have a lifespan of 9,216,000,000 years.

Tāvātimsa

The ruler of this heaven is Indra or Shakra, and the realm is also called Trayatrimia.

Each denizen addresses other denizens as the title "mārisa".

The governing hall of this heaven is called Sudhamma Hall.

This heaven has a garden Nandanavana with damsels, as its most magnificent sight.

Ajita the Licchavi army general was reborn here. Gopika the Sākyan girl was reborn as a male god in this realm.

Any Buddhist reborn in this realm can outshine any of the previously dwelling denizens because of the extra merit acquired for following the Buddha's teachings.

The denizens here have a lifespan of 36,000,000 years.

Tusita

Anāthapindika, a Kosālan householder and benefactor to the Buddha's order was reborn here.

The denizens here have a lifespan of 576,000,000 years.

Yāma

The denizens here have a lifespan of 1,444,000,000 years.

According to Tibetan Buddhism

There are 5 major types of heavens.

1. Akanishtha or Ghanavyiha

This is the most supreme heaven wherein beings that have achieved Nirvana live for eternity.

2. Heaven of the Jinas

3. Heavens of Formless Spirits

These are 4 in number.

4. Brahmaloaka

These are 16 in number, and are free from sensuality.

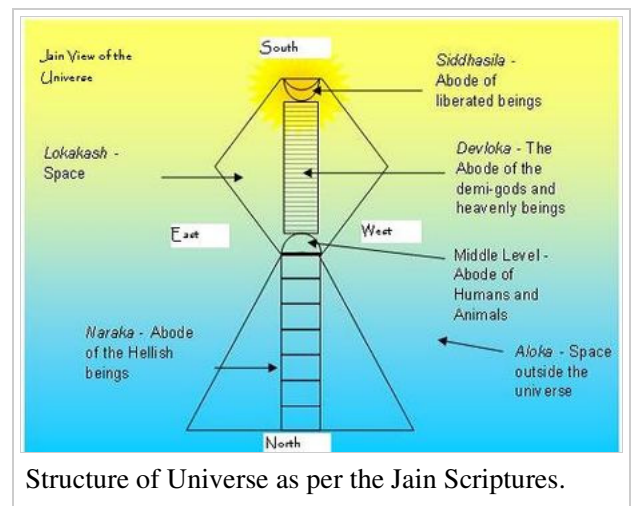
5. Devaloka

These are 6 in number, and contain sensuality.

Jainism

The shape of the Universe as described in Jainism is shown alongside. Unlike the current convention of using North direction as the top of map, this uses South as the top. The shape is similar to a part of human form standing upright.

The *Deva Loka* (Heavens) are at the symbolic "chest", where all souls enjoying the positive karmic effects reside. The heavenly beings are referred to as *devas* (masculine form) and *devis* (feminine form). According to Jainism, there is not one heavenly abode, but several layers to reward appropriately the souls of varying degree of karmic merits. Similarly, beneath the "waist" are the *Narka Loka* (Hell). Human, animal, insect, plant and microscopic life forms reside on the middle.



Structure of Universe as per the Jain Scriptures.

The pure souls (who reached Siddha status) reside at the very south end (top) of the Universe. They are referred to in Tamil literature as தென்புலத்தார் (Kural 43).

Chinese faiths

In the native Chinese Confucian traditions Heaven (Tian) is an important concept, where the ancestors reside and from which emperors drew their mandate to rule in their dynastic propaganda, for example.

Heaven is a key concept in Chinese mythology, philosophies and religions, and is on one end of the spectrum a synonym of *Shangdi* ("Supreme Deity") and on the other naturalistic end, a synonym for nature and the sky. The Chinese term for Heaven, *Tian* (天), derives from the name of the supreme deity of the Zhou Dynasty. After their conquest of the Shang Dynasty in 1122 BC, the Zhou people considered their supreme deity *Tian* to be identical with the Shang supreme deity *Shangdi*.^[38] The Zhou people attributed Heaven with anthropomorphic

attributes, evidenced in the etymology of the Chinese character for Heaven or sky, which originally depicted a person with a large cranium. Heaven is said to see, hear and watch over all men. Heaven is affected by man's doings, and having personality, is happy and angry with them. Heaven blesses those who please it and sends calamities upon those who offend it.^[39] Heaven was also believed to transcend all other spirits and gods, with Confucius asserting, "He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray."^[39]



Chinese Zhou Dynasty Oracle script for *Tian*, the character for Heaven or sky.

Other philosophers born around the time of Confucius such as Mozi took an even more theistic view of Heaven, believing that Heaven is the divine ruler, just as the Son of Heaven (the King of Zhou) is the earthly ruler. Mozi believed that spirits and minor gods exist, but their function is merely to carry out the will of Heaven, watching for evil-doers and punishing them. Thus they function as angels of Heaven and do not detract from its monotheistic government of the world. With such a high monotheism, it is not surprising that Mohism championed a concept called "universal love" (*jian'ai*, 兼愛), which taught that Heaven loves all people equally and that each person should similarly love all human beings without distinguishing between his own relatives and those of others.^[40] In Mozi's *Will of Heaven* (天志), he writes:

"I know Heaven loves men dearly not without reason. Heaven ordered the sun, the moon, and the stars to enlighten and guide them. Heaven ordained the four seasons, Spring, Autumn, Winter, and Summer, to regulate them. Heaven sent down snow, frost, rain, and dew to grow the five grains and flax and silk that so the people could use and enjoy them. Heaven established the hills and rivers, ravines and valleys, and arranged many things to minister to man's good or bring him evil. He appointed the dukes and lords to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked, and to gather metal and wood, birds and beasts, and to engage in cultivating the five grains and flax and silk to provide for the people's food and clothing. This has been so from antiquity to the present."

Original Chinese:「且吾所以知天之愛民之厚者有矣，日以磨為日月星辰，以昭道之；制為四時春秋冬夏，以紀綱之；雷降雪霜雨露，以長遂五穀麻絲，使民得而財利之；列為山川谿谷，播賦百事，以臨司民之善否；為王公侯伯，使之賞賢而罰暴；賦金木鳥獸，從事乎五穀麻絲，以為民衣食之財。自古及今，未嘗不有此也。」

Mozi, *Will of Heaven*, Chapter 27, Paragraph 6, ca. 5th Century BC

Mozi criticized the Confucians of his own time for not following the teachings of Confucius. By the time of the later Han Dynasty, however, under the influence of Xunzi, the Chinese concept of Heaven and Confucianism itself had become mostly naturalistic, though some Confucians argued that Heaven was where ancestors reside. Worship of Heaven in China continued with the erection of shrines, the last and greatest being the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, and the offering of prayers. The ruler of China in every Chinese dynasty would perform annual sacrificial rituals to Heaven, usually by slaughtering two healthy bulls as sacrifice.

Hinduism

Attaining heaven is not the final pursuit in Hinduism as heaven itself is ephemeral and related to physical body. Being tied by the bhoot-tatvas, heaven cannot be perfect either and is just another name for pleasurable and mundane material life. According to Hindu cosmology, above the earthly plane, are other planes: (1) Bhuva Loka, (2) Swarga Loka, meaning Good Kingdom, is the general name for heaven in Hinduism, a heavenly paradise of pleasure, where most of the Hindu Devatas (Deva) reside along with the king of Devas, Indra, and beatified mortals. Some other planes are Mahar Loka, Jana Loka, Tapa Loka and Satya Loka. Since heavenly abodes are also tied to the cycle of birth and death, any dweller of heaven or hell will again be recycled to a

different plane and in a different form as per the karma and "maya" i.e. the illusion of Samsara. This cycle is broken only by self-realization by the Jivatma. This self-realization is Moksha (Turiya, Kaivalya).

The concept of moksha is unique to Hinduism and is unparalleled. Moksha stands for liberation from the cycle of birth and death and final communion with Brahman. With moksha, a liberated soul attains the stature and oneness with Brahman or Pramatma. Different schools such as Vedanta, Mimansa, Sankhya, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, and Yoga offer subtle differences in the concept of Brahman, obvious Universe, its genesis and regular destruction, Jivatma, Nature (Prakriti) and also the right way in attaining perfect bliss or moksha.

In the Vaishnava traditions the highest heaven is Vaikuntha, which exists above the six heavenly lokas and outside of the mahat-tattva or mundane world. It's where eternally liberated souls who have attained moksha reside in eternal sublime beauty with Lakshmi and Narayana (a manifestation of Vishnu).

Mesoamerican religions

The Nahua people such as the Aztecs, Chichimecs and the Toltecs believed that the heavens were constructed and separated into 13 levels. Each level had from one to many Lords living in and ruling these heavens. Most important of these heavens was Omeyocan (Place of Two). The thirteen heavens were ruled by Ometeotl, the dual Lord, creator of the Dual-Genesis who, as male, takes the name Ometecuhtli (Two Lord), and as female is named Omecihuatl (Two Lady).

Polynesia

In the creation myths of Polynesian mythology are found various concepts of the heavens and the underworld. These differ from one island to another. What they share is the view of the universe as an egg or coconut that is divided between the world of humans (earth), the upper world of heavenly gods, and the underworld. Each of these is subdivided in a manner reminiscent of Dante's Divine Comedy, but the number of divisions and their names differs from one Polynesian culture to another.^[41]

Māori

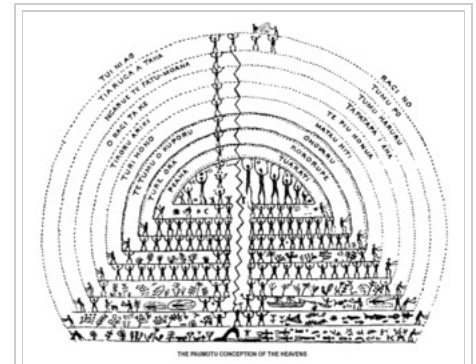
In Māori mythology, the heavens are divided into a number of realms. Different tribes number the heaven differently, with as few as two and as many as fourteen levels. One of the more common versions divides heaven thus:

1. Kiko-rangi, presided over by the god Toumau
2. Waka-maru, the heaven of sunshine and rain
3. Nga-roto, the heaven of lakes where the god Maru rules
4. Hau-ora, where the spirits of newborn children originate
5. Nga-Tauira, home of the servant gods
6. Nga-atua, which is ruled over by the hero Tawhaki
7. Autoia, where human souls are created
8. Aukumea, where spirits live
9. Wairua, where spirit gods live while waiting on those in
10. Naherangi or Tuwarea, where the great gods live presided over by Rehua

The Māori believe these heavens are supported by pillars. Other Polynesian peoples see them being supported by gods (as in Hawai'i). In one Tahitian legend, heaven is supported by an octopus.

Paumotu, Tuamotus

The Polynesian conception of the universe and its division is nicely illustrated by a famous drawing made by a Tuomotuan chief in 1869. Here, the nine heavens are further divided into left and right, and each stage is associated with a stage in the evolution of the earth that is portrayed below. The lowest division represents a period when the heavens hung low over the earth, which was inhabited by animals that were not known to the islanders. In the third division is shown the first murder, the first burials, and the first canoes, built by Rata. In the fourth division, the first coconut tree and other significant plants are born.^[42]



An 1869 illustration by a Tuomatuan chief portraying nine heavens.

Theosophy

It is believed in Theosophy of Helena Blavatsky that each religion (including Theosophy) has its own individual Heaven in various regions of the upper astral plane that fits the description of that Heaven that is given in each religion, which a soul that has been good in their previous life on Earth will go to. The area of the upper astral plane of Earth in the upper atmosphere where the various Heavens are located is called *Summerland* (Theosophists believe Hell is located in the lower astral plane of Earth which extends downward from the surface of the earth down to its center). However, Theosophists believe that the soul is recalled back to Earth after an average of about 1400 years by the *Lords of Karma* to incarnate again. The final Heaven that souls go to billions of years in the future after they finish their cycle of incarnations is called *Devachan*.^[43]

Criticism of the belief in Heaven

Most Marxists regard heaven, like religion generally, as a tool employed by authorities to bribe their subjects into a certain way of life by promising a reward after death.^[44]

The anarchist Emma Goldman expressed this view when she wrote, "Consciously or unconsciously, most atheists see in gods and devils, heaven and hell; reward and punishment, a whip to lash the people into obedience, meekness and contentment."^[45]

Many people consider George Orwell's use of Sugarcandy Mountain in his novel *Animal Farm* to be a literary expression of this view. In the book, the animals were told that after their miserable lives were over they would go to a place in which "it was Sunday seven days a week, clover was in season all the year round, and lump sugar and linseed cake grew on the hedges".^{[46][47]} However, George Orwell himself was a practicing, communicant member of the Church of England.

Some atheists have argued that a belief in a reward after death is poor motivation for moral behavior while alive.^{[48][49]} Sam Harris wrote, "It is rather more noble to help people purely out of concern for their suffering than it is to help them because you think the Creator of the Universe wants you to do it, or will reward you for doing it, or will punish you for not doing it. The problem with this linkage between religion and morality is that it gives people bad reasons to help other human beings when good reasons are available."^[50] C.S. Lewis

commented: "We are afraid that Heaven is a bribe, and that if we make it our goal we shall no longer be disinterested. It is not so. Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to. There are rewards that do not sully motives."^[51]

Neuroscience

In *Inside the Neolithic Mind*, Lewis-Williams and Pearce argue that a tiered structure of heaven, along with similarly structured circles of hell, is neurally perceived by members of many cultures around the world and through history. The reports are so similar across time and space that Lewis-Williams and Pearce argue for a neuroscientific explanation, accepting the percepts as real neural activations and subjective percepts during particular altered states of consciousness.

Many people who come close to death and have near death experiences report meeting relatives or entering "the Light" in an otherworldly dimension, which share similarities with the religious concept of Heaven. Even though there are also reports of distressing experiences and negative life-reviews, which share some similarities with the concept of Hell, the positive experiences of meeting or entering "the Light" is reported as an immensely intense feeling state of love, peace and joy beyond human comprehension. Together with this intensely positive feeling state, people who have near death experiences also report that consciousness or a heightened state of awareness seems as if it is at the heart of experiencing a taste of "Heaven".^[52]



The Assumption of the Virgin by Francesco Botticini at the National Gallery London, shows three hierarchies and nine orders of angels, each with different characteristics.

Postmodern views

- Omega Point (Tipler)

Representations in arts

Literature

- Works of fiction have included numerous different conceptions of Heaven and Hell. The two most famous descriptions of Heaven are given in Dante Alighieri's *Paradiso* (of the *Divine Comedy*) and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
- *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a series by C. S. Lewis offers a description of Heaven at the end of the sequence in the 'Last Battle', depicted as a lush green land surrounded by mountains under the rule of a lion Aslan.
- *Elric* and *Eternal Champion*, two series by Michael Moorcock, is one of many who offer Chaos-Evil(-Hell) and Uniformity-Good(-Heaven) as equally unacceptable extremes which must be held in balance.

- In *The Discovery of Heaven*, a 1992 novel by Harry Mulisch, heaven is located "at the end of the Big Bang in negative space".
- In *The Grand Tour of Heaven*, an Autobiography by Tobiah Neiditch, Heaven is depicted as looking like *halos* around the Sun, and shows how weather *phenomena on earth portrays what heaven really looks like when you die*.
- In Mary K. Baxter's book *The Divine Revelation of Heaven*, Mary describes a time in which she claims she was taken into heaven for 10 days with Jesus Christ.

Film

- *Made in Heaven*, a 1987 film which concerns two souls who cross paths in Heaven and then attempt to reconnect once they are reborn on Earth.
- *What Dreams May Come*, a 1998 movie that won an Academy Award for its depiction of heaven and hell as the subjective creations of the individual, was an essentially mystical interpretation of heaven, hell and reincarnation. It was based on the eponymous novel by Richard Matheson.
- *Heaven*, a 2002 film that implies heaven can be reached the higher up one goes (in the film's case, in a helicopter).
- *Field of Dreams*, a 1989 film in which heaven is symbolized by a baseball field. Several players ask Ray if they are in heaven, but he assures them that they are just in Iowa. At the end, Ray asks his father if there is a heaven, to which his father replies that it is the place where dreams come true.

Television

- In the *South Park* episodes "Do the Handicapped Go to Hell?" and "Probably", it is revealed that Mormons go to Heaven while everyone else lives in Hell. Due to a war between Heaven and Hell in "Best Friends Forever", God allows more people in.
- In the *American Dad!* episode "The Most Adequate Christmas Ever", Heaven is featured. Anyone who has done good in their life is flown from Limbo to the Gates of Heaven by a large griffin (which might be Ziz). There was a reference that Jim Henson tried to sneak into Heaven only for him and Kermit the Frog to end up in a flat rectangle prison (similar to General Zod in *Superman II*) as Kermit begs for them to be released.
- Heaven is featured in the *Renkin 3-kyū Magical? Pokān* episode "The Spell of Rebirth is a Trip Through Hell." Uma ends up sent to Heaven with a letter to God (portrayed by Keimie) that Uma has been banished from Hell for all eternity. Uma spends time in Heaven until she gets bored and takes God's option to restore Uma to life.
- In the *Simpsons* episode "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Guest Star" when Bart and Homer became Catholic, Marge imagined herself in Heaven, which is split into two parts. First there is Catholic Heaven, full of Irish, Italian, and Mexican people where everyone is partying, including Bart, Homer and Jesus.

Then there is Protestant Heaven, where people play croquet or tennis.

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See also

- Baptism
- Blessed
- Death
- God
- Hell
- Indulgence
- Paradise
- Penance
- Purgatory
- Redemption
- Saint
- Salvation
- Servant of God
- Venerable

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External links


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Zebul (biblical figure)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Zebul is a character in the Hebrew Bible, appearing in Judges 9. He is one of Abimelech's officers, and the governor (or "commandant"^[1]) of the city of Shechem. Zebul played an important role in the rebellion and defeat of Gaal, secretly sending messengers to Abimelech warning him of the situation.

Barry Webb describes him as a loyal friend of Abimelech, and a "shrewd military tactician".^[2]

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Categories: Hebrew Bible people | Book of Judges



Gaal (left) points out to Zebul the approach of Abimelech's army.

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