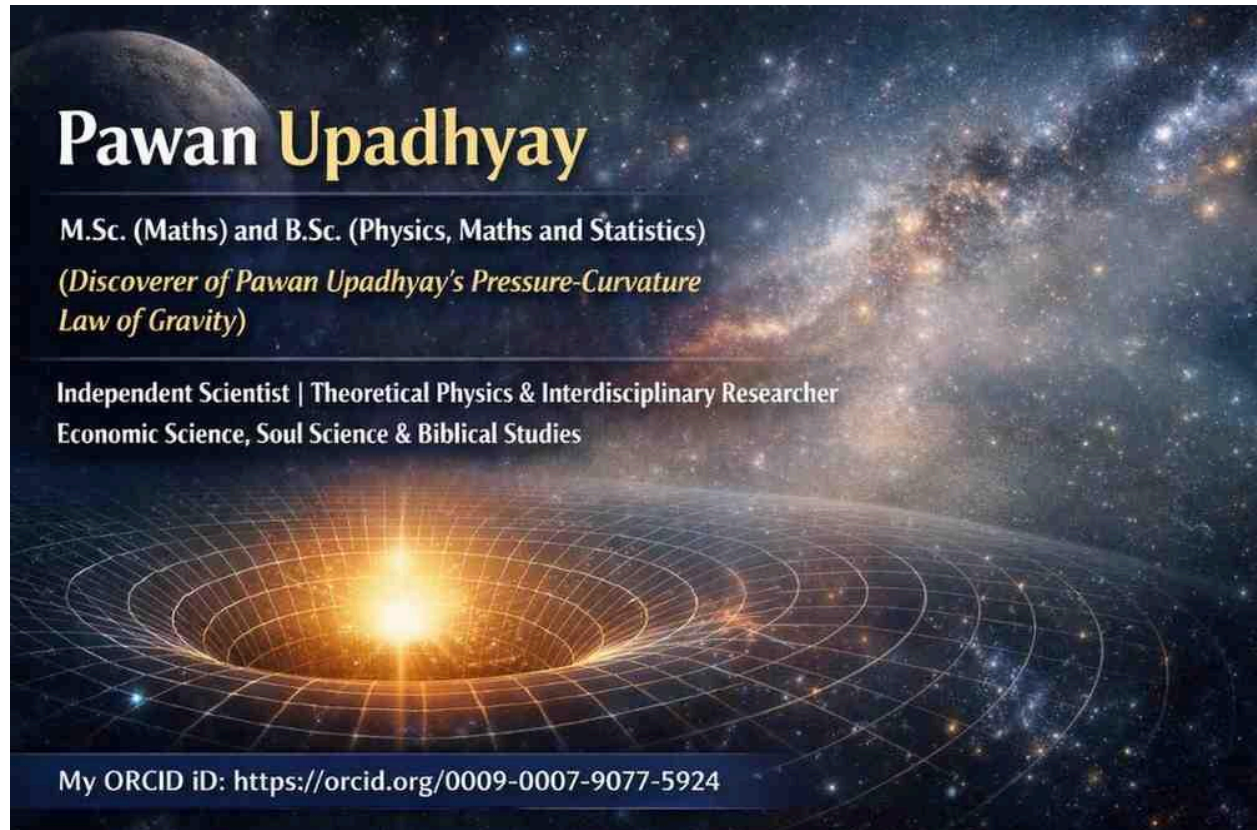


Satan Lives in Satanil, Not in Hell:

Angelic Administration of Punishment and Divine Authority in Early Apocalyptic Thought

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Abstract

This paper argues that early Jewish apocalyptic literature presents a theological framework in which Satan does not reside in hell nor rule it. Instead, Satan exists in a fallen realm or state known as Satanil, operating under the post-expulsion identity Sotona. Hell (Gehenna) is not depicted as Satan's domain but as a divinely governed place of punishment administered by obedient angels acting under God's command. By examining the Book of Enoch, alongside Hebrew Bible passages and Second Temple traditions, this study challenges later medieval interpretations and restores the original distinction between temptation, judgment, and punishment.

Keywords

Satanil, Sotona, Satanail, Hell, Gehenna, Book of Enoch, Fallen Angels, Angelology, Divine Judgment

1. Introduction

In popular religious imagination, Satan is frequently portrayed as the ruler or king of hell, presiding over the punishment of sinners. This image, however, is absent from early Jewish scripture and apocalyptic literature. Instead, these texts describe Satan as a fallen but active being who tempts and accuses humanity while awaiting final judgment. Hell, by contrast, is portrayed as a divinely regulated place of punishment governed by God and administered by angels.

This paper advances the thesis that Satan lives in Satanil, not in hell, and that punishment in hell is executed by angels who obey God's instructions. This distinction is crucial for understanding early Jewish conceptions of evil, justice, and divine sovereignty.

2. Satanail, Sotona, and Satanil in the Book of Enoch

The Book of Enoch provides one of the earliest and most detailed accounts of angelology and the origin of evil. In Chapter XXXI, Satan is described as originally bearing the name Satanail, a name marked by the divine suffix -il, indicating heavenly status. Following rebellion, he is expelled from the heavens and becomes known as Sotona.

This transformation does not indicate the creation of a new being. Rather, it signifies a change of status and identity resulting from expulsion. Sotona is described as "the evil spirit of the lower places," emphasizing exile rather than imprisonment. The realm associated with this fallen condition is referred to as Satanil, understood not as hell but as a lower realm or state of existence.

Importantly, the text emphasizes that although Satan's status changes, his intelligence and moral awareness remain intact. He retains full understanding of righteousness and sin, making his rebellion conscious and deliberate.

3. "He Made Sotona from the Heavens": Expulsion, Not Creation

The phrase "he made Sotona from the heavens" should be understood theologically rather than literally. It does not imply that Sotona was created at that moment, but that Satanail was rendered a fugitive through expulsion from the heavenly realm. The loss of the -il suffix reflects de-divinization and separation from divine order, not a loss of intellect or agency.

Thus, the correct formulation is:

He lives in Satanil and is called Sotona.

Sotona is not a place but a name denoting fallen identity. Satanil is the realm or state in which this fallen adversary exists.

4. Hell (Gehenna) as a Place of Punishment

In early Jewish theology, hell—commonly identified as Gehenna—is an eschatological reality associated with final judgment. It is not a kingdom, nor is it ruled by Satan. Instead, it functions as an instrument of divine justice.

Gehenna is consistently portrayed as:

- Governed by God
- Reserved for judgment and punishment
- Activated according to divine decree

There is no textual evidence in early Jewish sources that Satan resides in or governs Gehenna.

5. Angels of Hell and Divine Administration of Punishment

Apocalyptic literature assigns the execution of punishment to angels, not to Satan or demons.

These angels:

- Act in obedience to God
- Execute punishment according to divine command
- Possess no autonomous or rebellious authority

Even when a chief angel or overseer of hell is mentioned, this figure is not Satan and does not act independently. Authority in hell remains fully subordinate to God, reinforcing divine sovereignty.

6. Satan's Role: Tempter and Accuser, Not Punisher

Across early Jewish texts, Satan's role is consistent:

- He tempts humanity
- He accuses or tests
- He deceives through knowledge and persuasion

Punishment, however, is explicitly excluded from Satan's function. Judgment belongs to God alone, and punishment is administered by angels. This distinction preserves moral accountability: humans sin by choice, Satan tempts but does not compel, and God judges with justice.

This understanding is evident in texts such as the Book of Job and the Book of Zechariah, where Satan appears as an accuser within divine proceedings, not as an executioner.

7. Later Development of the "Satan Rules Hell" Concept

The portrayal of Satan as the ruler of hell emerges much later, particularly in medieval Christian theology and literature. Works such as *Divine Comedy* contributed significantly to popular imagery but do not reflect early Jewish or biblical doctrine.

These later developments should be understood as theological and literary evolution rather than original teaching.

8. Core Conclusion

Sotona is Satanail after expulsion —
not a new being,
not a ruler of hell,
but a fallen adversary cast from heaven.

Satan lives in Satanil as an exile, not as a king. Hell is not his dwelling or domain, but a divinely governed place of punishment administered by obedient angels according to God's instructions.

9. Conclusion

Early Jewish apocalyptic literature presents a coherent theological system in which:

- Satan lives in Satanil, not in hell
- Satan is a fallen, intelligent adversary awaiting judgment
- Hell is governed by God
- Punishment is administered by angels, not by Satan

The popular image of Satan ruling hell represents a later distortion rather than original doctrine. Restoring the early framework clarifies the nature of evil, preserves divine sovereignty, and reinforces moral responsibility within human freedom.

10. Matthew 25:41 and the Meaning of “Eternal” (αἰώνιος)

“Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”
— Gospel of Matthew 25:41

10.1 The Greek Term αἰώνιος (aiōnios)

The word translated as “eternal” in Matthew 25:41 is the Greek adjective αἰώνιος (aiōnios), derived from the noun αἰών (aiōn), meaning:

- an age
- an epoch
- a divinely appointed period of time

In Second Temple Jewish and early Christian usage, aiōnios does not primarily describe endless duration, but rather belonging to the coming age, especially the age of divine judgment. Thus, πυρ αἰώνιον (pyr aiōnion, “eternal fire”) is best understood as: Fire belonging to the age of judgment, not necessarily fire already burning or currently occupied.

10.2 αἰώνιος and Eschatology

In apocalyptic contexts, aiōnios consistently points to:

- Future fulfillment
- Divine finality
- Irreversible judgment

It does not indicate:

- Present residence
- Ongoing rule
- Administrative authority

Therefore, Matthew 25:41 does not say that the devil currently lives in eternal fire, but that such fire is prepared for him in the age to come.

10.3 Harmony with Enoch XXXI

This understanding aligns precisely with Book of Enoch, Chapter XXXI, which portrays Satan as:

- Expelled from heaven
- Existing as Sotona in the lower places
- Intellectually aware of his condemnation
- Still active prior to final judgment

The Greek *aiōnios* confirms that punishment is eschatological, not present.

10.4 “Prepared” (ἡτοιμασμένον) and αἰώνιος

The verb ἡτοιμασμένον (*hētoimasmenon*), translated “prepared,” reinforces futurity. Something prepared is made ready in advance, not already occupied.

Thus:

- Hell is prepared for the devil
- Fire is *aiōnios* (belonging to the age of judgment)
- Satan is not reigning, but awaiting

10.5 Theological Implication

When Matthew 25:41 is read with attention to *αἰώνιος*:

- Hell is not Satan’s present dwelling
- Satan does not rule eternal fire
- Eternal fire belongs to the coming age

- Satan is a future recipient, not an administrator

This directly supports the thesis that:

Satan lives in Satanil now, not in hell.

Integrated Doctrinal Conclusion

The Greek term αἰώνιος confirms the Enochic framework:

- Sotona is Satanail after expulsion
- He exists presently in Satanil, the lower realm of exile
- πῦρ αἰώνιον is prepared for him in the age to come
- Hell is governed by God and executed by angels
- Satan is condemned, not enthroned

Sotona is not a ruler of eternal fire,
but a fallen adversary awaiting judgment
in the age (αἰών) appointed by God.

References

- Book of Enoch, esp. chs. XXXI, LIV, CIII
- Book of Job 1–2
- Book of Zechariah 3
- Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic literature
- Medieval theological developments and literary sources

Greek Footnotes

- αἰών (aiōn) — “age, epoch, extended period”; see BDAG, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed.
- αἰώνιος (aiōnios) — “pertaining to an age; age-long; eschatological”; not inherently endless in duration.
- Cf. Second Temple apocalyptic usage in Book of Enoch and related literature.
- ἡτοιμασμένον (hētoimasmenon) — perfect passive participle of ἐτοιμάζω, “to prepare beforehand,” indicating readiness rather than present use.