

Mandaeism

Gnosticism

The Mandaean Book of John the Baptist
Translated by G.R.S. Mead (1924)



Mandaeans in Iraq

Mandaeism is regarded as the only form of ancient Gnosticism surviving to the present day. Its adherents, Mandaeans, lived primarily in Iraq, around the lower Euphrates, until the war in 2003. Since the war, most have dispersed, mainly to Iran. Mandaeans believe in a Supreme Being in a world of light and a universal division between light and darkness. As in the Gnostic

tradition, they believe that flawed demiurges created the physical world. They venerate John the Baptist above all prophets and do not venerate either Jesus or Muhammad. They strongly believe in the practice of baptism as essential to purification from sin. The following is from the Mandaean Book of John the Baptist. Yahya is John; God is often referred to as Life.

For more, see: www.sacred-texts.com/chr/gno/gjb/index.htm.

19: YAHYĀ proclaims in the nights and says: "Through my Father's discourses I give light and through the praise of the Man, my creator, I have freed my soul from the world and from the works that are hateful and wrong. The Seven put question to me, the Dead who have not seen Life, and they say: "In whose strength dost thou stand there, and with whose praise dost thou make proclamation?" Thereon I gave to them answer: "I stand in the strength of my Father and with the praise of the Man, my creator. I have built no house in Judæa, have set up no throne in Jerusalem. I have not loved the wreath of the roses, not commerce with lovely women. I have not loved the defective, not loved the cup of the drunkards. I have loved no food of the body, and envy has found no place in me. I have not forgotten my night-prayer, not forgotten wondrous Jordan. I have not forgotten my baptizing, not [forgotten] my pure sign. I have not forgotten Sunday, and the Day's evening has not condemned me. I have not forgotten Shilmai and Nibdai, who dwell in the House of the Mighty. They clear me and let me ascend; they know no fault, no defect is in me."

When Yahyā said this, Life rejoiced over him greatly. The Seven sent him their greeting and the Twelve made obeisance before him. They said to him: "Of all these words which thou hast spoken, thou hast not said a single one falsely. Delightful and fair is thy voice, and none is an equal to thee. Fair is thy discourse in thy mouth and precious thy speech, which has been bestowed upon thee. The vesture which First Life did give unto Adam, the Man, the vesture which First Life did give unto Rām, the Man, the vesture which First Life did give unto Shurbai, the Man, the vesture which First Life did give unto Shum bar Nū,—has He given now unto thee. He hath given it thee, O Yahyā, that thou mayest ascend, and with thee may those ascend
* * * * * The house of defect will be left behind in the desert. Everyone who shall be found sinless, will ascend to thee to the Light's region; he who is not found sinless, will be called to account in the guard-houses."

25: YAHYĀ proclaims and speaks: "Ye nobles, who lie there, ye ladies, who will not awaken,—ye who lie there, what will you do on the Day of the Judgment? When the soul strips off the body, on Judgment-Day what will you do? O thou distracted, jumbled-up world in ruin! Thy men die, and thy false scriptures are closed. Where is Adam, the First Man, who was here head of the æon? Where is Hawwā (Eve), his wife, out of whom the world was awakened to life? Where is Shit-il (Seth), son of Adam, out of whom worlds and æons arose? Where is Rām and Rūd, who belonged to the Age of the Sword? Where are Shurbai and Shar-hab-ēl, who belonged to the Age of the Fire? Where is Shum bar Nū (Shem, son of Noah), who belonged to the Age of the Flood? All have departed and have not returned and taken their seats as Guardians in this world. [The Last Day] is like a feast-day, for which the worlds and the æons are waiting. The Planets are [like] fatted oxen, who stand there for the Day of the Slaughter. The children of this world are [like] fat rams, who stand in the markets for sale. But as for my friends, who pay homage to Life, their sins and transgressions will be forgiven them."

26: Gnosis of Life who is far from the height [writes]:
"Wherefor do ye weep, generations, wherefor weep ye, O peoples? Wherefor fade your splendour? For you have I brought my Image, I betook myself into the world."

57: THE Treasury am I, Life's Treasury (Sīmath-Haiyē); the Treasury am I, the Mighty One's Treasury; the Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. A crown was I for the Mighty from everlasting. The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. Ever did I give light to the treasures and to the shekīnahs, and was for adornment to Jordan. For adornment became I to Jordan, who was from everlasting, through whom the treasures give light. Great [Life] made me limpid and lucent and made me into a vesture. He made me into his vesture, which day in and day out sings measureless praise of the Æther.

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. To the King of the Splendour became I a crown. The treasures shine through my glory and praise my form beyond measure.

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury—I who as adornment settled down on the King of the Splendour, so that he shone in his mind, that he became bright and shining, and his form glittered more than the [light-] worlds. As I (lit. it) gave light and enlightenment unto the treasures and to the shekīnahs [e'en] in the Æther, the King laid me as vesture round N^e□ab the Radiant. N^e□ab the Radiant then took me, brought me and laid me as vesture o'er Jordan. As vesture o'er Jordan he laid me, through whom the treasures shine beyond measure.

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. The wicked are blind and see not. I call them unto the Light, yet they busy themselves with the Darkness. "O ye wicked," I unto them cry, "ye who sink down in the Darkness, arise and fall not into the deep." I cry unto them; yet the wicked hear not and sink into the great Sea of the Ending. Therefore was Jordan made a bridge for the treasures; a bridge for the treasures became he, while he cut off the wicked and hurled them into the great Sea of the Ending.

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. A crown I became for Life's Gnosis. He bestowed on me the rulership over the treasures and the shekīnahs which are there [yonder].

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. Of the light-worlds was I the enlightener. Day in and day out they sing praise to Great [Life], and through me they mount upward and behold the Light's region.