

Compositions Featuring The Figure Of Gabriel In Illustrated Manuscripts Of Qisas Al-Anbiya*

Minyatürlü Kısas-ı Enbiyâ Nüshalarında Cebrail Fıgürlü Kompozisyonlar

Seçil Sever**

Abstract: The aim of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the depictions of the Archangel Gabriel in 16th-century Safavid illustrated Qisas al-Anbiya manuscripts, focusing on image-text relationships, design characteristics, and Gabriel's compositional role and symbolic significance within the aesthetic and production context of the period. Miniature painting, a vital element of manuscript art, served to visually support and enrich the narrative in handwritten texts. Across various civilizations, manuscripts were produced on themes such as politics, science, medicine, literature, history, and religion. Among these, the Qisas al-Anbiya (Stories of the Prophets) genre—which conveys the lives, miracles, and instructive events of prophets from the creation of the universe through the stories of Adam, Abraham, Jesus, and Muhammad—holds particular significance. One of the most renowned works in this genre is the Qisas al-Anbiya by Nisaburi (al-Tha'labi) (d. 1035), written in 11th-century Nishapur. Approximately nineteen illustrated copies of this work have survived and are preserved in various museum and library collections worldwide. Within these manuscripts, the depiction of Gabriel—the archangel and messenger of divine revelation—is of particular interest from an art historical perspective. In Sufi literature, angels are described as spiritual beings made of light, invisible to human eyes, and completely obedient to God's commands. Through miniature painting, this verbal and theological description is rendered into visual form. This study specifically examines Gabriel figures in illustrations of the scene “Abraham Being Cast into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel”, a miracle narrative in which the Prophet Abraham is punished by King Nimrod for breaking idols and thrown into a massive fire. According to Islamic tradition, the miracle occurs when, by God's command, Gabriel transforms the fire into a garden of paradise, saving the prophet from harm. The research sample comprises three Safavid-era illustrated manuscripts of Qisas al-Anbiya, produced in Qazvin and Shiraz and currently held in the following collections: Spencer Persian 1 (1577) at the New York Public Library, Diez Fol A.3 (1577) at Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and Persan 1313 (1595) at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study first established a theoretical framework through literature review and then conducted a descriptive visual analysis

* Bu makale; Seçil Sever tarafından Doç. Filiz Adıgüzel Toprak danışmanlığında 2020 yılında tamamlanan “Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) 'Kısas-ı Enbiyâ' Adlı Eserindeki Minyatürlerde Melek Figürü ve Özgün Tasarımlar” adlı Sanatta Yeterlik tezinden yararlanılarak hazırlanmıştır.

This article was prepared using information from the Master of Arts thesis titled “Angel Figures and Original Designs in the Miniatures of Nisâbüri's (Sa'lebî) Work 'Kısas-ı Enbiyâ'” completed in 2020 by Seçil Sever under the supervision of Associate Professor Filiz Adıgüzel Toprak.

** Dr. Fakülte Sekreteri, İzmir Demokrasi Üniversitesi, Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi
PhD, Faculty Secretary of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Izmir Democracy University
ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1506-2840>
sesevef@gmail.com

Cite as/ Atıf: Sever, S. (2025). Compositions featuring the figure of Gabriel in illustrated manuscripts of Qisas Al-Anbiya. *Turkish Studies - Religion*, 20(Ö1), 267-290. Ankara Bilim University Publications. <https://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.88113>

Received/Geliş: 01 November/Kasım 2025

Accepted/Kabul: 15 December/Aralık 2025

Published/Yayın: 20 December/Aralık 2025

Checked by plagiarism software



of the original miniatures. Findings show that the New York and Berlin manuscripts demonstrate meticulous craftsmanship and extensive use of gold, reflecting a refined design aesthetic, while the Paris manuscript is characterized by simpler workmanship. Across all versions, Gabriel is portrayed as a sacred figure with large, vividly colored wings, fair skin, and dressed in garments aligned with the fashion of the time, representing the artistic and spiritual ideals of the 16th-century Safavid world.

Structured Abstract: This study aims to examine the representations of the Archangel Gabriel in the 16th-century Safavid illustrated manuscripts of *Qisas al-Anbiya* (Stories of the Prophets) in relation to text-image interaction, design characteristics, and compositional significance within the artistic and aesthetic context of the period. The central research question addresses how Gabriel, depicted as the divine messenger and intermediary of revelation, was conceptualized and visualized within the theological and artistic framework of the Safavid era, and how this figure was represented across different *Qisas al-Anbiya* manuscripts.

The necessity of this research arises from the limited number of comparative art-historical studies that systematically analyze the depictions of Gabriel in various Safavid manuscripts. By focusing on these visual representations, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how spiritual beings such as angels were interpreted by artists as intermediaries between the sacred and the material realms. Thus, the research explores the process through which theological concepts were transformed into tangible visual forms through the medium of miniature painting. In this regard, the study provides a contribution to the fields of Islamic visual culture, iconography, and the artistic transmission of religious narratives.

The research is based on art-historical, iconographic, and semiotic approaches, and further integrates theological interpretations of angelology with the stylistic evolution of Persian miniature painting. The concept of angels, particularly the figure of Gabriel, forms a fundamental aspect of Abrahamic religious traditions. In Islamic belief, Gabriel (Jibril) is the angel of revelation responsible for conveying God's messages to prophets, most notably the revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad. In Sufi literature, angels are described as luminous beings created from light—unseen to the human eye but capable of assuming human form when necessary. This theological perception provided artists with a symbolic framework through which the invisible could be made visible.

Within the Islamic manuscript tradition, miniatures functioned not merely as decorative elements but as visual interpretations of sacred texts. These paintings transformed abstract theological concepts into legible iconographic systems. The Safavid period (1501–1736) represents the peak of Persian miniature art, with Qazvin and Shiraz emerging as the two principal artistic centers. The Qazvin school is characterized by elegant proportions, delicate detail, and refined use of lapis lazuli and gold, whereas the Shiraz school emphasizes decorative richness, vivid coloration, and narrative intensity. Situating Gabriel's representations within these two artistic schools demonstrates how form and meaning were synthesized in religious art.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws on prior research by Milstein (1999), Karataş (2018), and Sever (2020), all of whom explored *Qisas al-Anbiya* as a convergence of art, faith, and cultural identity. However, this study diverges from previous works by focusing specifically on the figure of Gabriel—an essential iconographic subject in Islamic sacred texts and artistic symbolism—thereby offering an original contribution to the literature.

The study employs a qualitative and comparative methodology that combines descriptive visual analysis with literature-based contextual interpretation. The research corpus consists of three illustrated Safavid manuscripts of *Qisas al-Anbiya* authored by Nisābūrī (al-Tha'labī): the Spencer Persian 1 manuscript (1577, Qazvin) held at the New York Public Library; the Diez Fol. A.3 manuscript (1577, Shiraz) at Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; and the Persan 1313 manuscript (1595, Qazvin) preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The analysis focuses exclusively on miniatures depicting the episode of “The Casting of Prophet Abraham into the Fire and His Rescue by Gabriel.”

Data were gathered from high-resolution digital reproductions, catalog records, and existing scholarly analyses. The analytical process consisted of four stages: identifying visual similarities and differences among the miniatures; examining compositional structure, spatial organization, color usage, and ornamentation; analyzing Gabriel's posture, attire, wings, and facial expressions; and finally, evaluating these features within their respective stylistic traditions. The method prioritizes the interpretation of symbolic meaning and cultural context rather than quantitative measurement, thereby emphasizing the relationship between form, meaning, and belief.

The comparative analysis demonstrates both continuity and variation in the portrayal of Gabriel across the three manuscripts. In all scenes, Gabriel is depicted opposite Prophet Abraham, extending his hand as a gesture of divine assistance—an iconographic constant symbolizing protection and mercy. However, stylistic distinctions reflect the regional artistic traditions of Qazvin and Shiraz.

In the New York manuscript (Qazvin, 1577), Gabriel is illustrated with elongated body proportions, a calm facial expression, and garments embroidered in gold over lapis lazuli blue. The wings transition from white to gold and red, symbolizing both movement and transcendence. The refined spatial balance and intricate ornamentation indicate the high craftsmanship of a royal atelier.

In the Berlin manuscript (Shiraz, 1577), Gabriel is portrayed with softer facial features, vivid red and yellow tones, and closed wings symbolizing tranquility and contemplation. The garments include swan motifs and dense decorative patterns, reflecting the ornamental richness of the Shiraz school. The composition incorporates multiple figures and natural elements, creating narrative complexity and visual dynamism.

In the Paris manuscript (Qazvin, 1595), a more restrained aesthetic is observed. Gabriel wears a long golden robe devoid of intricate patterns and holds a blue handkerchief to cool Prophet Abraham—a subtle gesture signifying compassion. The substitution of yellow pigments for gold leaf and the simplicity of execution suggest that the manuscript was likely produced in a commercial rather than royal workshop.

Across the three manuscripts, Gabriel's iconography unites theological significance with aesthetic form. The balance between human grace, divine authority, and compositional centrality transforms Gabriel into a visual mediator between heaven and earth. The depiction of fire as a garden-like space reinforces themes of divine mercy and miracle. Variations in material quality and craftsmanship reflect the hierarchical nature of production within Safavid society and the distinction between courtly and commercial ateliers.

The study concludes that the figure of Gabriel in 16th-century Qisas al-Anbiya manuscripts embodies the synthesis of religious thought and aesthetic expression characteristic of Safavid art. Gabriel serves not only as the angel of revelation but also as a visual metaphor for divine protection, beauty, and order. The consistent representation of Gabriel across different production centers reveals a shared visual language of Islamic spirituality, while stylistic variations illustrate regional aesthetics and evolving systems of artistic patronage.

This research constitutes a systematic iconographic comparison of Gabriel depictions in Qisas al-Anbiya miniatures. It demonstrates how artists conveyed metaphysical beliefs through concrete imagery in Islamic manuscripts. Future studies could broaden this framework to include Ottoman, Timurid, or Mughal examples, providing a more comprehensive view of the historical continuity of angelic iconography in Islamic art.

Overall, this study underscores that miniature paintings were not mere illustrations but sophisticated interpretive spaces that helped readers visualize and comprehend the sacred narratives they accompanied. Through this medium, artists created a visual language where divine, aesthetic, and human elements converge harmoniously. Thus, the figure of Gabriel emerges as both a theological concept and an artistic form—bridging revelation and representation, faith and form, within the spiritual imagination of the Islamic world.

Keywords: Traditional Turkish Arts, Miniature Art, Qisas Al-Anbiya, Prophet Abraham, Angel, Gabriel, New York Public Library, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Bibliothèque Nationale de France

Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı, 16. yüzyıl Safevî döneminde üretilmiş minyatürlü Kısas-ı Enbiyâ nüshalarındaki Cebrail figürlerini; resim-metin ilişkisi, tasarım özellikleri ve kompozisyondaki yeri ile önemi açısından, dönemin estetik ve üretim anlayışı çerçevesinde karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemektir. Minyatür sanatı, el yazması eserlerde anlatıyı görsel olarak destekleyen ve zenginleştiren önemli bir unsurdur. Tarih boyunca farklı toplumlarda siyaset, bilim, tıp, edebiyat, tarih ve din gibi birçok alanda el yazması eserler üretilmiştir. Bu eserler arasında, evrenin yaratılışından başlayarak Hz. Âdem, Hz. İbrâhim, Hz. İsa ve Hz. Muhammed gibi peygamberlerin hayat hikâyeleri, mucizeleri ve öğüt verici olaylarını içeren Kısas-ı Enbiyâ türü önemli bir yere sahiptir. Bu türün en bilinen örneklerinden biri, 11. yüzyılda Nişabur'da Nisâbüri (Sa'lebî) (ö. 1035) tarafından yazılmış olan Kısas-ı Enbiyâ adlı eserdir. Bu eserin minyatürlü yaklaşık on dokuz nüshası günümüze ulaşmış olup, dünyanın farklı müze ve koleksiyonlarında muhafaza edilmektedir. Bu el yazmalarında yer alan vahiy meleği ve baş melek olan Cebrail'in tasvirleri, minyatür sanatı açısından özel bir öneme sahiptir. Tasavvufi

edebiyatta melekler, nurdan yaratılmış, gözle görülmeyen ve Allah'ın emirlerine tam itaat eden ruhani varlıklar olarak tanımlanır. Minyatür sanatı aracılığıyla bu soyut kavramsal tanım, somut bir görsel temsile dönüştürülmüştür. Bu bağlamda çalışma, özellikle “Hz. İbrâhîm’in Ateşe Atılması ve Cebrail Tarafından Kurtarılması” konulu sahnelerde yer alan Cebrail figürlerine odaklanmaktadır. Semavî dinlerin ortak peygamberlerinden biri olan Hz. İbrâhîm, diğer peygamberler arasında merkezi bir konuma sahiptir. Hz. İbrâhîm’in en önemli mucizelerinden biri, putları kırdığı gerekçesiyle kral Nemrut tarafından büyük bir ateşe atılması ve bu sırada Allah'ın emriyle başmelek Cebrail'in ateşi cennet bahçesine dönüştürerek onu kurtarmasıdır. Araştırmanın örneklemini, Safevî döneminde Kazvin ve Şiraz şehirlerinde üretilmiş ve günümüzde New York Halk Kütüphanesi (1577 tarihli Spencer Persian 1), Berlin Devlet Kütüphanesi (1577 tarihli Diez Fol A.3) ve Paris'teki Fransa Ulusal Kütüphanesi (1595 tarihli Persan 1313) koleksiyonlarında bulunan üç farklı Kısas-ı Enbiyâ nüshası oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma, nitel araştırma yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilmiş; önce alan yazın taraması yapılarak kuramsal çerçeve oluşturulmuş, ardından seçilen orijinal minyatürler betimsel analiz yoluyla incelenmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular, New York ve Berlin nüshalarının detaylı işçilik ve yoğun altın kullanımıyla özenli bir tasarım anlayışını yansıttığını; Paris nüshasının ise daha sade bir işçilikle üretildiğini göstermiştir. Tüm nüshalarda Cebrail figürlerinin dönemin modasına uygun şekilde giydirilmiş, beyaz tenli, estetik güzelliğe sahip insan suretinde ve çok renkli, büyük kanatlara sahip kutsal varlıklar olarak tasvir edildiği belirlenmiştir. Bu görsel özellikler, dönemin hem sanatsal hem de manevî değerlerini yansıtan önemli göstergeler olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Geleneksel Türk Sanatları, Minyatür Sanatı, Kısas-ı Enbiya, Hz. İbrahim, Melek, Cebrail, New York Public Library, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Bibliothèque Nationale de France

Introduction

In illuminated manuscripts of Qisas al-Anbiya (Stories of the Prophets), depictions of angels hold significant prominence, with the figure of the archangel Gabriel (Jibril) being the most frequently illustrated among them. The concept of angels is an integral part of the core belief systems of Abrahamic religions, especially Islam. All three major Abrahamic faiths recognize angels as intermediaries between God and prophets. While the names of Cebrail (Gabriel) and Mikail (Michael) appear in the Bible and Torah, it is noteworthy that the names of Azrael and Israfil are not explicitly mentioned (Serdar, 2008, p. 228).

According to Islamic belief, angels are spiritual beings created from light, fully obedient to God's commands. They glorify God and express their devotion by forming rows around the divine throne (Yeşilyurt, 2018, p. 12). This exalted status of angels has also made them prominent figures in art. The archangel Gabriel, the messenger bringing divine revelations to the prophets, is the most commonly depicted among them. In Islamic art, Gabriel is often portrayed with wings and sometimes in human form, emphasising his spiritual nature and ability to operate in different realms (Çolak, 2012, p. 32–33). In this context, compositions illustrating Gabriel visualise religious texts and reflect how Islamic perceptions of angels are manifested in art (Sever, 2020, p. 5).

“Qisas al-Anbiya” translates to "stories or histories of the prophets." These works aim to provide moral lessons by recounting prophets' life stories and preaching activities in an instructive manner (Şahin, 2002, p. 495). As one of the most important and rich genres of Turkish Islamic literature, “Qisas al-Anbiya” draws directly from the Qur'an and Hadith, while also being influenced by the written and oral cultural traditions, customs, and practices of various societies (Karataş, 2018, p. 113). Among the most renowned examples of this genre are “Qisas al-Anbiya” by Kisai and “Qisas al-Anbiya” (“Ara'is al-Majalis wa Nafa'is al-Ara'is”) by Nisaburi (Tha'labi) (Şahin, 2002, p. 496; Sever, 2020, p. 5).

This study employs qualitative research methods, including descriptive analysis and literature review. The scope of the research encompasses illustrated manuscripts of “Qisas al-Anbiya” by Nisaburi (Tha'labi) (d. 427/1035), produced in the Safavid geographical context and dated to the 16th century. These manuscripts are housed in collections such as the New York Public

Library (NYPL) Spencer Pers 1, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Diez Fol A.3, and Bibliothèque Nationale De France Pers 1313. The study is limited explicitly to the depiction of Gabriel in miniatures related to the narrative of “The Casting of Prophet Abraham into the Fire.” A theoretical framework is established through a literature review on angels in Abrahamic religions, the Islamic understanding of angels, the archangel Gabriel as the angel of revelation, and the Safavid era miniature styles of Qazvin and Shiraz. The study aims to analyze the illustrations of Gabriel in these “Qisas al-Anbiya” manuscripts in terms of the text-image relationship, his position and significance in the composition, and the design features specific to the period. The analyzed illustrated manuscripts are categorized based on their current locations and referred to as the New York, Berlin, and Paris manuscripts. The depictions of Gabriel in these miniature compositions are compared in terms of compositional structure, Gabriel’s role and prominence, as well as his posture, wings, garments, accessories, colors, and other design elements.

The Concept Of Angels And Archangel Gabriel in Abrahamic Religions

The term "angel," denoting God's messenger, refers to spiritual beings characterized by complete obedience to divine commands and innate goodness (Erbaş, 2004, p. 40). Some scholars suggest that the term was originally "mal'ak," later transformed into "malak" by elision and transfer of the vowel to the letter “lam.” Its plural forms are “mala’ika” and “mala’ik” (Serdar, 2009, p. 142). Other scholars argue that the term derives from the root "melek," referring to those who govern among spiritual beings, akin to how the term "malik" is used for human rulers (Çolak, 2012, p. 16).

According to Erbaş (2004, p. 40), the term angel originates from the Hebrew root “lo’ah,” leading to the word “mal’ah,” meaning "messenger sent to fulfill God’s will." This concept corresponds to the Greek “angeles” (messenger) and the Latin “angelus.” All Abrahamic religions Islam, Judaism, and Christianity accept the existence of angels as a tenet of faith. In the Qur'an, angels are explicitly mentioned as an article of faith in verses such as AlBaqarah (2:285), p. "The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and [so do] the believers. They all believe in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers..." Similarly, Surah AnNisa (4:136) emphasizes believing in Allah and His angels (Sever, 2020, p. 92).

Angels are described in Islamic theology as luminous beings beyond sensory perception, who neither eat nor sleep, lack gender, and do not experience life stages such as youth or old age (Özalan, 2010, pp. 29–30). As intermediaries who transmit revelation from the unseen realm to the visible world, they are considered the first beings to be believed in after Allah. Denial of angels equates to rejecting divine scriptures and prophets (Özbek, 1990, p. 301). Christianity portrays angels as spiritual entities created before humanity and dwelling in the heavens (Bible, Genesis 28:12) (URL 1). Though invisible, they possess superhuman strength and wisdom and may take human form to fulfil their missions (Genesis 19:1; 18:2). In Islamic theology, angels are described as delicate and luminous beings devoted to worshipping and obeying Allah. Their lack of gender, independence from bodily desires, and constant glorification of God are emphasized (Hud, 69–70) (Çolak, 2012, p. 30). The Qur'an mentions angels with wings in pairs, trios, or quadruples (Fatir, 1) and narrations describe Gabriel as having 600 wings, though details about their functionality remain unspecified (Çolak, 2012, p. 36). Among the duties of angels are the constant glorification of Allah, worshipping Him, and carrying out His commands without fail. They are sinless and innocent (Nahl, 4950) (Özbek, 1990, p. 320). Angels' physical and spiritual abilities are characterized by their capacity to traverse vast distances with remarkable speed (Çolak, 2012, p. 36-37).

Angels can assume human form. For instance, it is narrated in Surah Maryam that Gabriel appeared to Mary in human form, p. “And mention in the Book Mary...” (Çolak, 2012, p. 32-33). Other examples supporting this include angels who appeared in human form to Prophet Abraham and Prophet Hud. Additionally, it is mentioned in hadiths that Prophet Muhammad likened Gabriel's appearance in human form to Dihyah ibn Khalifah. However, it is emphasized that this description

pertains to Gabriel's assumed form rather than his true essence (Çolak, 2012, p. 33). Angels may also assume human form to assist people during battles.

Each angel has unique ranks and statuses (Saffat, 164). The four archangels, p. Gabriel, Michael, Israfil, and Azrael, are regarded as superior to others and are collectively known as the “Muqarrab Angels.” Moreover, the existence of other angels, such as the Guardian Angels (Hafaza), the Bearers of the Throne (Hamalei Arsh), and Ruh al-Amin, is also acknowledged (And, 1998, p. 263-264; Serdar, 2009, p. 161).

Archangel/Angel Of Revelation: Gabriel

In Islamic belief, Gabriel holds a significant role as the angel who conveyed the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad through divine revelation. This is articulated in the Qur'an: “It is not for any human that Allah should speak to them except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal, by His permission, whatever He wills. Indeed, He is Most High, Most Wise” (Shura, 51). According to Islamic sources, Gabriel is created from light and possesses an exceptionally beautiful appearance, being among the highest-ranking angels known as “Muqarrabun”. Furthermore, the Qur'an states that Prophet Muhammad saw Gabriel in his true form on two occasions (Sever, 2020, p. 109).

Islamic texts describe Gabriel as one of the angels who bear the Throne, residing in the seventh heaven at a station called Sidrat alMuntaha. It is also mentioned that Gabriel will descend to Earth on the Day of Judgment and during the Night of Power “Laylat alQadr”. This angel is portrayed as a guide to prophets, with responsibilities such as teaching letters and agriculture to Prophet Adam, assisting Prophet Noah in building the ark, and protecting Prophet Abraham from fire (Serdar, 2008, p. 230231; Karacabey, 2012, p. 48). The figure of Gabriel is also prominent in Islamic art, particularly in miniature painting. In these depictions, Gabriel is often portrayed in various scenes as a corporeal entity.

One of the early examples of such depictions is found in the work *Jami' alTawarikh*. In this manuscript, Gabriel is depicted delivering the command to “recite” to Prophet Muhammad (Image 1). The miniature reflects influences from Central Asian, Chinese, and Seljuk art, with notable features in the angel figure such as a threelobed crown and distinctive clothing characteristics (Yüksel, 2018, p. 97). In another scene from the manuscript of *Jami' alTawarikh*, titled “The Ascension (Mi'raj) of Prophet Muhammad,” Gabriel is depicted alongside the figure of Buraq (Image 2). In both miniatures, Gabriel is portrayed with feminine characteristics (Yüksel, 2018, p. 96).



Image 1: *Angel Gabriel Delivering the Command to Recite*, from *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, by Rashid al-Din Fazlullah, 1306–1307, University of Edinburgh Library, Heritage Collections. No. 20, folio 221. Retrieved November 7, 2025, from

<https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/media/book/showAllPagesThumbnail?mid=UoEsha%7E4%7E4%7E64742%7E103064&os=200>



Image 2: *The Ascension (Mi'raj) of Prophet Muhammad, Gabriel depicted, from Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh by Rashid al-Din Fazlullah, 1306–1307, University of Edinburgh Library, Heritage Collections. No. 20, folio 202. Retrieved October 1, 2025, from <https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/media/book/showAllPagesThumbnail?mid=UoEsha%7E4%7E4%7E64742%7E103064&os=200>*

Additionally, in the manuscript titled *Mirajname*, housed in the Topkapı Palace Museum, the scene “Prophet Muhammad Ascending on the Shoulders of Angel Gabriel” presents Gabriel in a more majestic manner (Image 3). Here, Gabriel is portrayed with a large stature, a golden crown, elaborate garments, a long sash, and earrings. His wings and feathers are meticulously painted with gradient color transitions (Sever, 2020, p. 110). The depiction of Gabriel in miniatures emphasizes his role as a spiritual being representing both beauty and divine authority. Islamic art, in its figural representations, sought to highlight the spiritual message while combining it with intricate aesthetic details. These miniatures are considered significant works that reflect the artistic sensibilities of the era, its aesthetic approaches, and the religious and symbolic significance of Gabriel.



Image 3: *Gabriel Carries Muhammad Over the Mountains, from Mi'rājnāma, 1360–1370, Tabriz (Topkapı Palace Museum, H.2154). Retrieved October 1, 2025, from*

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/96/Gabriel_carries_Muhammad_over_the_Mountains._Miraj-nama._1360-1370%2C_Tabriz_%28Topkapi%2C_H.2154%29.jpg

Qazvin and Shiraz Miniature Styles

After the Safavid capital was moved from Tabriz to Kazvin in 1548, the city became the center of royal ateliers, paving the way for the development of a new painting style. Initially influenced by the Tabriz school, Kazvin miniatures gradually acquired a distinct character (Çağman & Tanındı, 1979, p. 42). The mobility of artists between cities such as Tabriz, Kazvin, Mashhad, Herat, and Shiraz facilitated the dissemination of the Kazvin style, making it a significant component of Safavid painting (İnal, 1995, p. 160). The evolution of the Kazvin style was significantly supported by patrons of the arts, such as Shah Tahmasp (1524–1576), Sam Mirza (1534–1576), and Sultan Abraham Mirza (1540–1577). Kazvin's style is characterized by aesthetic elegance and refinement. Its distinctive features include elongated necks, small heads, and slender bodies in the figures. Female figures are depicted with headscarves, while male figures are marked by elongated, triangular facial features and prominent attributes (Image 4) (Kaplan, 2013, p. 75). The landscapes in Kazvin miniatures highlight natural elements with an aesthetic emphasis, utilizing rich color palettes and intricate details (Şani, 2016, p. 352; Shahmari, 2014, p. 15). The delicate figures and richness of natural depictions made the Kazvin style a pivotal turning point in Safavid art.



Image 4: *Hunt Scene in the Makhzan al-Asrar (Treasury of Secrets)*, folio from the Khamsa (Quintet) of Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209), Iran, Qazvin, Safavid Empire, c. 1570 CE. Retrieved October 1, 2025, from <https://sites.smith.edu/about-face-islamic-art/the-khamsa-qazvin-and-tabriz/>

Since the 14th century, Shiraz has been recognized as a significant center of knowledge and book arts in the Islamic world. In the early Safavid period, art workshops in Shiraz maintained Akkoyunlu book art traditions while producing manuscripts. By the second half of the 15th century, simpler and massproducible manuscripts emerged (Güney, 2017, p. 135). During the 16th century,

Turkmen influences became evident in Shiraz miniatures, with figures and compositions enriched by decorative elements. The Shiraz style is noted for its pastel tones, harmonious colors, extensive use of gold star embellishments, and meticulous craftsmanship (Shahamari, 2014, p. 16; Şani, 2016, p. 355). In the 1560s, inspired by Tahmaspera royal manuscripts, more elaborate works were created. Post 1570, manuscripts became larger, and miniature compositions were depicted on broader surfaces (Uluç, 2006, p. 225). Figures in Shiraz miniatures are gracefully designed with round faces and fluid movements. Short pointed caps and turbans, hallmarks of Turkmen tradition, distinguish the figures (İnal, 1995, p. 165). Natural elements are prominent, with colorful hills, large floral clusters, and longleafed plants providing an idealized depiction of nature. These features add aesthetic depth and decorative richness to the compositions (Güney, 2017, p. 135).

A notable aspect of Shiraz miniatures is their intricate compositional structure. Scenes are populated with layered figures, enabling detailed storytelling (Şani, 2016, p. 355). This style, which merges Turkmen and Safavid traditions, gained prominence in Islamic art with its graceful figures, decorative opulence, and impressive compositional arrangements. The miniatures produced in the 16th century, in particular, remain pivotal examples of both aesthetic and technical innovation, influencing later periods (Image 5).



Image 5: *Courtiers Present Gifts to a Ruler, Safavid Shiraz, Iran, c. 1560.* Retrieved October 1, 2025, from <https://www.christies.com/lot/courtiers-present-gifts-to-a-ruler-safavid-5668133/?from=salesummary&intObjectID=5668133&lid=1>

The Story Of Prophet Abraham's Throwing Into The Fire

Prophet Abraham is a significant figure recognized as a prophet in three major religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. His struggle for monotheism is detailed in the Torah, the Bible, and the Qur'an. According to Islamic sources, Prophet Abraham's father was the idolater Azer, and his mother is variously reported as being Ūşâ, Nûnâ, or Ebyûnâ in different accounts. While there are varying opinions on his birthplace, the Torah mentions Ur of the Chaldeans, while Islamic sources accept Şanlıurfa as his birthplace (Harman, 2000, p. 272–273). In the Qur'an, the story of Prophet Abraham is told in detail, especially in the Surahs of Abraham, AlBaqarah, AaleImran, AlAn'am, Hud, Maryam, AlAnbiya, and AsSaffat, with his name appearing 68 times (Sever, 2020, p. 172).

This story begins with a dream of King Nimrod of Babylon, in which a star eclipses the moon and sun. The astrologers interpret this as a sign that a male child will be born, threatening Nimrod's power. As a result, Nimrod orders that pregnant women be watched and any male children born be killed. However, Prophet is born in a cave outside the city and survives. As he grows, he begins to

work with his father in the idolmaking business, where he criticizes idol worship. One night, he breaks the idols, leaving only the largest one intact. Following this, Nimrod orders Abraham to be imprisoned, and years later, he is sentenced to be thrown into the fire to be burned alive. Abraham is catapulted into the fire but, by God's will, he is unharmed. According to some traditions, he remains in the fire for seven to fifty days, and when his family comes to bury his bones, they find him alive. After this event, Nimrod vows to sacrifice four thousand cattle to the god of Abraham. Abraham, saved from the fire, marries Sarah and migrates with his family to Syria. Though pursued by Nimrod's men, Abraham is saved through a miracle that causes his language to be translated into Hebrew. He later lives in the regions of Harran, Canaan, Jordan, and Egypt (Kaplan, 2013, p. 30–31; And, 1998, p. 138–144).

This story is one of the important compositions in miniature art where the figure of Gabriel is directly depicted. The miniatures illustrating this story are typically found in *Qisas al-Anbiya* manuscripts. Surviving examples include ms. 1, fol. 23b from the New York Public Library's Spencer Persian Collection (New York manuscript), ms. 3, fol. 32a from the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin's Diez Album (Berlin manuscript), and ms. 1313 from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France's Persian Collection (Paris manuscript). This study aims to compare these three manuscripts by introducing them and examining the figure of Gabriel in the miniatures, focusing on design features, positions in the composition, and artistic significance.

Qisas al-Anbiya

“*Qisas al-Anbiya*” refers to a collection of stories about the lives of prophets in Turkish Islamic literature. The term “*qisas*” is derived from the Arabic verb *qassa*–*yaqussu*, which means to narrate, tell, or report. It also encompasses meanings such as tracing or following (Sever Demir and Adıgüzel Toprak, 2020, p. 1886). Within this context, “*qisas*” is used as a term for recounting instructive events and stories related to prophets and their communities (Karataş, 2013, p. 23). The word “*anbiya*” is the plural form of *nabi*. Derived from Arabic, *nabi* refers to a person who receives divine revelation, is inspired in their heart, or is warned through righteous dreams. It is a term that encapsulates the characteristics and duties of prophets. Thus, “*anbiya*” signifies a group of prophets (Budu, 2020, p. 74).

The *Qisas al-Anbiya* genre draws directly from the Qur'an and hadiths. It is also influenced by the oral and written traditions, customs, and practices of various communities. This has enriched the genre and expanded its perspective as a result of intercultural interaction. These stories not only convey religious knowledge but also aim to provide moral and social lessons. The life stories of prophets, the challenges they faced, and how they overcame these difficulties have always served as a source of reflection for readers (Karataş, 2018, p. 113).

In Turkish Islamic literature, the stories found in *Qisas al-Anbiya* served as a source of inspiration for poets and authors. These narratives were enriched through literary devices such as allusion (*talmih*), quotation (*iktibas*), metaphor (*mecaz*), and simile (*teşbih*). For instance, the beauty of Prophet Joseph, the patience of Prophet Noah, or the courage of Prophet Moses are frequently explored themes in literature. These texts were visualized through miniatures, which not only added wisdom to the narratives but also imbued them with spiritual depth. One of the most widely read *Qisas al-Anbiya* works is that of Nisaburi (Tha'labi). It is reported that 19 illustrated manuscript copies of this work have survived to the present day. Of these, nine are located in Istanbul, while others are preserved as rare pieces in manuscript collections in Berlin, Paris, Dallas, New York, and Dublin libraries and museums (Sever, 2020, p. 34–35). This study examines the manuscripts located in New York, Berlin, and Paris. The sample focuses on the depictions of the angel Gabriel in miniatures illustrating the stories of Prophet Abraham in each of these three manuscripts.

The New York Manuscript Of Qisas al-Anbiya

The “Qisas al-Anbiya” manuscript, registered as ms. 1 in the Spencer Persian Collection of the New York Public Library, is a work from the Safavid period in the Kazvin style (Milstein, 1999, p. 198). Although the scribe and illuminator of the manuscript are unknown, it is documented that the work was completed by Iranian artists in Qazvin on 18th of Shawwal, 984 AH / 8th of January, 1577. The manuscript measures 352x240 mm and consists of 209 folios. Written in Persian, the text is calligraphed in the Talik script. The text area is approximately 223x130 mm, and each folio contains 14 lines. The binding of the manuscript is made of sheep skin and features a gilded ornamental design (Image 6). The manuscript was acquired in 1952, having been purchased from London, and has since been included in the New York Public Library Collection. The manuscript contains a total of 18 miniatures (Sever, 2020, p. 70–72).



Image 6: The New York Manuscript, Binding, Zahriye Page, Title Page (Sever, 2020, p. 73-75).

The New York Manuscript, Miniature Depicting The Throwing Of Abraham Into The Fire

The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," found on Folio 23v in the New York manuscript. The edge of the miniature in the New York manuscript are adorned with intricate halkar patterns consisting of plant and bird motifs. The first part of the composition depicts a paradise garden surrounded by fire motifs, set against a green background. In the garden's center, a stream flows, and at its core, Prophet Abraham is portrayed kneeling on a hexagonal golden throne (Image 7). He is depicted wearing a headgear and a halo, with a dark blue inner garment and a longsleeved outer garment in a pale pink shade. The figure of Gabriel, bent forward and extending a hand of assistance, is illustrated with its right wing closed and its left wing opened towards Abraham. This scene is encircled by golden flame motifs, creating a halo effect that includes both figures. The garden's floor is decorated with flowers in shades of red, yellow, and blue. Additionally, behind Prophet Abraham and Gabriel, a catapult, used to throw the prophet into the fire, is depicted with its bucket part turned upwards.

The second part of the composition includes a mountain range colored in turquoise blue, with four male figures representing the onlookers of the event. These figures, dressed in yellow and orange clothing and wearing turbans, express the extraordinary nature of the event through their curious and astonished expressions and gazes. Their attire, along with their turbans, also reflects the everyday fashion of the Safavid people of the 16th century. These figures, placed in the far background,

contribute to the depth of the composition. The area around the flames is so vast and intense that the people are shown retreating to distant places behind the mountains to avoid the fire. It is believed that the artists here wanted to emphasize the miraculous aspect of the event.

The upper part of the composition features the sky, depicted with white cloud motifs in circular linear designs over a blue background. In the topright corner, a tower made of blue bricks extends upward beyond the scene, with a second tower constructed from pink bricks right in front of it. On the balcony of this tower, King Nimrod is shown seated, wearing a goldenornamented blue crown, a black headdress, and a red garment. He gazes despondently at the scene, his hand resting on his chin in despair. In the foreground, a catapult, almost as tall as the tower, is designed in a reddishburgundy color and appears as if it has just launched the prophet, with its bucket extending towards the scene. The miniature composition is carefully planned to create both spatial and thematic depth, enriched with symbolic elements. The motifs, color harmony, and the details of the depicted events strongly emphasize the religious and cultural context of the scene (Sever, 2020, p. 182–184).



Image 7: The New York Manuscript Of “Qisas al-Anbiya”, The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," Folio 23v (Sever, 2020, p. 185).

The New York Manuscript, The Figure of Gabriel

The Gabriel figure in the New York manuscript is depicted as a significant focal point within the composition, characterized by meticulous detail and fine craftsmanship. Gabriel is portrayed as a divine messenger with physical and symbolic elements that emphasize his powerful nature. Positioned as the second main character of the scene, the figure is placed centrally, to the right of the prophet (Image 8). Gabriel stands opposite Hz. İbrâhîm, extending a hand of assistance. His left wing is open toward Hz. İbrâhîm, while his right wing is closed. This posture can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of divine aid. Gabriel’s hands are reaching out to Hz. İbrâhîm, signifying his intention to offer mercy and support.

Gabriel is depicted with white skin and black hair. These traits highlight both his divine essence and idealized beauty. His hair is neatly styled, and his facial features carry a soft and tranquil expression. Atop his head, he wears a golden crown, colored in lapis lazuli blue, a precious metal of

the time. While common figures wear turbans, Gabriel's wearing this crown symbolizes his divine nature and spiritual authority. His garments are decorated with golden patterns and are lapis lazuli in color, extending down to his ankles. He wears a shortsleeved tunic in orange with golden accents and stylized floral motifs, reaching midhigh.

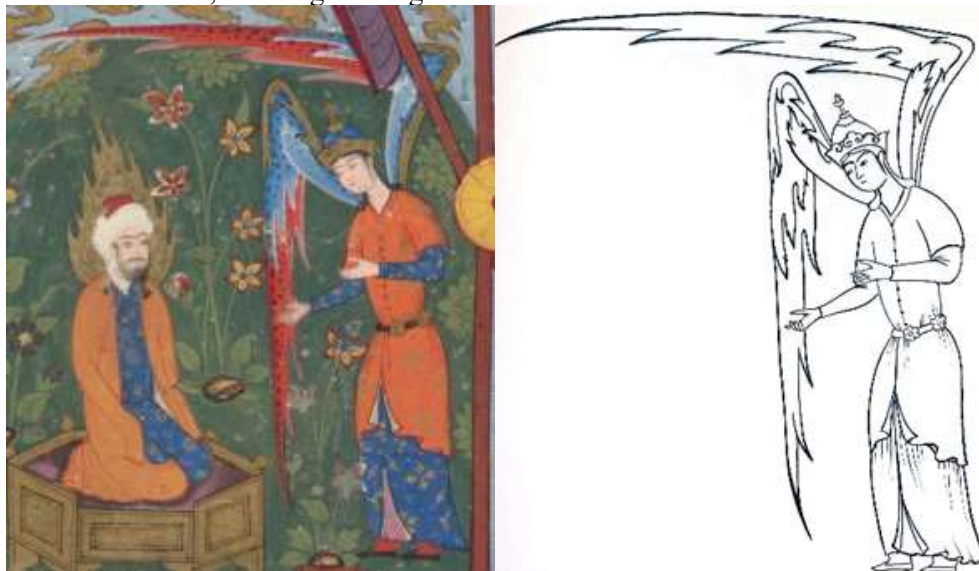


Image 8: The New York Manuscript Of “Qisas al-Anbiya”, The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," Folio 23v Detail Of Gabriel, Drawing Of Gabriel (Sever, 2020, p.186).

The Berlin Manuscript Of Qisas al-Anbiya

The "Qisas al-Anbiya" manuscript is registered as Diez A. Fol. 3 in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek and was copied on January 9, 1577, in Shiraz. The scribe's identity is unknown, and the identity of the miniaturist has not been determined either; however, it is likely that the work was prepared by two different artists. The manuscript is bound with a decorated leather cover and measures 29,5 x 17,5 cm, consisting of a total of 246 leaves. The text area, with 15 lines per page, measures approximately 16.5 x 17.5 cm. (Image 9). Written in ta'liq script on glazed paper, the manuscript adopts the Safavid period Shiraz school of miniature painting style. The manuscript contains a total of 22 miniatures, 9 of which feature angel figures. Additionally, the work includes 5 illuminated pages (Milstein et al., 1999, p. 185-186).



Image 9: The Berlin Manuscript, Binding, Zahriye Page, Title Page (Sever, 2020, p. 54-57).

The Berlin Manuscript, Miniature Depicting The Throwing Of Abraham Into The Fire

The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," found on Folio 32v of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Diez 3, is one of the significant miniature examples from the Safavid period Shiraz school. The composition of this work is structured around three main elements: the celestial garden, mountain range, and sky (Image 10). The scene's background is depicted as a lush, green heavenly garden. The area where Prophet Abraham and Gabriel are situated is surrounded by fiery motifs. In the green foreground, red, yellow, and densely foliated flower motifs are depicted, with a gilded, hexagonal-shaped throne at the center of the composition. Prophet Abraham is shown kneeling and sitting, facing Gabriel. He is depicted as a young, cleanshaven figure with a fair complexion and round facial features. His turban and halo emphasize his prophetic status. His clothing consists of a red inner garment adorned with gold embroidery and a longsleeved outer garment decorated with light blue and gold embellishments. In the middle part of the composition, a mountain range is depicted in shades of purple. Behind the mountains, a group of six male figures from different age groups, representing the observing public, is shown. These figures, with their postures of mutual conversation and inquisitive discussion, enhance the dramatic effect of the scene. The figures' detailed clothing reflects the Safavid fashion of the period, with yellow and red garments and white turbans prominently featured.

The upper portion of the composition is completed with a sky design of white cloud motifs on a dark blue background. This area symbolizes the sacredness and the spiritual dimension of the story. In the top right corner, a tower with a red and pink tile design is depicted. On the balcony of the tower, King Nimrod is portrayed wearing a gold-adorned blue turban and a red garment. Nimrod is shown in a state of despair, with his hands resting on his chin, watching the events unfold. At the base of the tower, a giant catapult is depicted, with its arm slanted towards the scene. Behind the catapult, a figure, seemingly in astonishment, is portrayed, possibly operating the machine.

The composition of the miniature not only provides spatial and thematic depth but also adds dynamic movement to the narrative through the figures. Each figure is designed to reflect both the physical and emotional aspects of the event. Elements such as the public's astonishment, Nimrod's helplessness, and Abraham's submission enhance the dramatic structure of the miniature.



Image 10: The Berlin Manuscript of “Qisas al-Anbiya”. The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," Folio 32v (Sever, 2020, p. 177).

The Berlin Manuscript, The Figure of Gabriel

In this composition, Gabriel stands out as a central figure representing divine assistance and protection. He is positioned directly opposite Prophet Abraham, standing with an outstretched hand, offering help. His closed wings and graceful posture indicate that he is depicted as a calm yet determined being. Gabriel is portrayed as tall, with a fair complexion, long neck, and black hair. He wears a special headdress made of gold and lapis lazuli. His hair extends to his shoulders on both sides of his neck. His attire consists of an inner garment embroidered with gold, featuring leaf and fourpoint details in lapis lazuli, and an outer garment with short sleeves, kneelength, decorated with stylized swan motifs in gold. The figure's waist is adorned with a belt made of a black cord, with golden claws. The elegant details of his wings and clothing emphasize his spiritual grandeur as a divine figure (Image 11). The coloration of his wings and the fine craftsmanship on them highlight Gabriel's importance as a symbol of holiness. The outer contour of the wings transitions from burgundy to dark red, while the inner part is colored blue, with dark yellow at the tips. The wings feature dot details in dark blue over blue areas and burgundy over yellow. Additionally, the feathers on the wings are intricately detailed with white, using a blending technique to enhance the fine workmanship.



Image 11: The Berlin Manuscript of “Qisas al-Anbiya”. The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," Folio 32v Detail of Gabriel, Drawing of Gabriel (Sever, 2020, p. 178).

The Paris Manuscript Of Qisas al-Anbiya

The “Qisas al-Anbiya” is registered in the Bibliothèque Nationale De France under the Persan 1313 collection and was transcribed in 1595 in Kazvin, Iran. The manuscript is written in Persian, and the calligrapher was KağīMīr b. Muḥibb'Alī Rašīdī. One of the miniatures, located on page 79v, contains the name 'Aka Rıza,' suggesting that the manuscript may have been created by multiple artists. The manuscript is bound in a green cover, with dimensions of 290 x 190 mm, and the text area measures 220 x 125 mm. It consists of 192 folios, with 15 lines of text per page. The text is written in Persian Nasta'lik script. (Image 12). The miniatures follow the Kazvin style. The manuscript is written on glazed paper, and there are 20 miniatures in total. The section headings in the manuscript are written in Arabic with red, gold, or blue ink (Sever, 2020, p. 66).



Image 12: The Paris Manuscript, Binding, Zahriya Page, Title Page (Sever, 2020, pp.67-69).

The Paris Manuscript, Miniature Depicting The Throwing Of Abraham Into The Fire

The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire," found on Folio 31v in the Paris manuscript. The miniature on the Paris manuscript is a notable example of the Safavidera Kazvin school, featuring rich design elements. The composition is divided into four sections along a horizontal axis. In the first part of the scene, a lush green area containing a spring, representing the heavenly garden, is depicted. In this grassy area, orange, purple, and blue stones, along with small plants surrounding them, are illustrated (Image 13). At the bottom of this grassy field, a serene fountain is flowing, miraculously created to provide coolness and comfort to Prophet Abraham. At the center of the composition, Prophet Abraham and the figure of Gabriel are depicted. Prophet Abraham is shown with white skin, a mustache, and sparse facial hair, wearing a white turban and halo on his head. On the right side of the scene, Prophet Abraham is seated crosslegged on a golden, hexagonal throne, wearing a simple blue long-sleeved garment. A white turban is placed on his head, and a halo accentuates his sacredness. Flames, which do not burn him, are seen surrounding his legs and body, symbolizing Prophet Abraham's sanctity not only as a divine figure but also as someone protected from the fire of Nimrod (Sever, 2020, p. 179).

In the second part of the composition, a range of mountains in purple tones adds spatial depth to the scene. Behind these mountains, in the third section, a beigecolored mountain range is depicted. Three male figures representing the distant spectators of the miraculous event are placed here, positioned behind the mountains. These figures belong to different age groups, and one of them, showing signs of astonishment, has placed his hand on his mouth, expressing surprise with his body language. The fourth and topmost section of the composition features a plain blue sky, arranged without cloud motifs. The simplicity of the sky can be seen as a deliberate choice to enhance the dramatic effect of the figures and the central event.



Image 13: The Paris Manuscript Of “Qisas al-Anbiya”, The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire," Folio 31v (Sever, 2020, p. 181).

The Paris Manuscript, The Figure of Gabriel

In this miniature, the figure of Gabriel is prominently placed at the center, standing directly opposite Prophet Abraham. While his right wing is closed, he extends his left wing backward and reaches out with his left hand towards Prophet Abraham, offering assistance. Gabriel's stance and movement clearly emphasize his role as a guiding and protective angel. He is depicted with white skin and wearing a golden, lapis lazulicolored headpiece. Gabriel's garment is a single long, goldcolored dress. In his right hand, he holds a blue towel/handkerchief, which he uses to cool Prophet Abraham, symbolizing his mercy and kindness (Image 14). The lapis lazuli color in Gabriel's headpiece and the towel he holds has a slight overflow, appearing in places as light blue. His wings are elegantly detailed with gold on the outer contour, red on the continuation of the wings, and light blue feathers on the inner section, signifying Gabriel's divine exaltation. The color harmony established among the green, purple, and gold tones used in the miniature highlights the divine dimension of the story. Prophet Abraham and Gabriel, placed at the center of the scene, form both the visual and spiritual center of the composition.



Image 14: Paris Manuscript Of “Qisas al-Anbiya”, The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire," Folio 31v, Detail Of Gabriel, Drawing Of Gabriel (Sever, 2020, p. 182).

23vComparative Analysis of Gabriel Figures

Feature	The New York Manuscript	The Berlin Manuscript	The Paris Manuscript
Year	1577, Qazvin	1577, Shiraz	1595, Qazvin
Placement	Standing directly opposite Prophet Abraham. The left wing is extended toward Abraham, while the right wing is closed. Both hands are extended to offer help.	Standing directly opposite Prophet Abraham. Wings are closed. Both hands are extended to offer help.	Standing directly opposite Prophet Abraham with the right wing closed and the left wing extended backward. The left hand is extended to offer help.
Headwear	A headpiece in gold and lapis lazuli (blue), adorned with golden embroidered edges and a crest.	A headpiece in gold and lapis lazuli (blue), adorned with golden embroidered edges and a crest.	A headpiece in gold and blue, adorned with golden embroidered edges and a crest.
Hair	Long, straight black hair gathered on both sides of the neck, extending to the shoulders.	Long, straight black hair gathered on both sides of the neck, extending to the shoulders.	Depicted with fair skin, but hair details are not clearly specified.
Clothing	An inner garment of lapis lazuli color, with gold embroidery in a quadruple leaf pattern, V-necked, buttoned at the front, and extending to the ankles.	An inner garment of lapis lazuli color, with gold embroidery in a quadruple dot and leaf pattern, V-necked, buttoned at the front, and extending to the	A singlelayer, long, goldcolored robe with no patterns. No belt depicted.

Feature	The New York Manuscript	The Berlin Manuscript	The Paris Manuscript
	An outer garment with short sleeves, orange in color, kneelength, V-necked, buttoned at the front, with gold stylized floral patterns. Worn with a belt featuring black cords and gold clasps shaped like claws.	ankles. An outer garment with short sleeves, red in color, kneelength, V-necked, buttoned at the front, with gold stylized swan patterns. Worn with a belt featuring black cords and gold clasps shaped like claws.	
Wings	The right wing is closed, while the left is open. White base colored with tones of gold, blue, and red. Gradient transitions in feathers achieved with white.	Wings are closed. Colored red towards the edges, blue inward, and adorned with gold details. Feathers detailed with a meticulous white brushing technique.	The outer contour is gold, wings transition from red at the edges to pale blue feathers inside. Feather detailing achieved with gradient brushing techniques.
Posture and Motion	Compassionate and supportive, with the right hand extended in aid to Prophet Abraham. The opened wing symbolizes active help and protection.	Calm and resolute posture, extending a hand to assist Prophet Abraham. Symbolizes submission and protection.	Holding a blue handkerchief in the right hand to provide coolness. The posture signifies protection and guidance.
Colors and Patterns	Lapis lazuli (royal blue) and orange (movement and warmth) dominate the garments. Gold embroidery emphasizes divine status. Wing harmony in gold, blue, and red.	Gold and lapis lazuli (royal blue) with red accents highlight divine grandeur. Wing transitions enriched with yellow and blue tones.	Garments adorned with gold, while wings showcase gold and blue tones to signify sanctity and grandeur.
Facial Expression	Soft, serene, and full of compassion.	Determined yet gentle expression.	Depicted with a protective and guiding expression.
Significance in Scene	Gabriel is depicted as directly aiding Prophet Abraham, representing the divine dimension of the miraculous event. His position and stance enhance the dramatic composition.	With a theme of divine assistance and protection, he is a focal point in the scene. The calm posture provides balance amidst dramatic elements.	Centrally positioned, representing the spiritual dimension of the event. The extended hand emphasizes the divine intervention leading to Prophet Abraham's salvation.

Conclusion

This study examines three distinct miniatures depicting the theme of "The Casting of Prophet Abraham into the Fire and His Rescue by Gabriel" found in 16th-century Qisas al-Anbiya manuscripts produced in the Safavid realm and currently housed in museum collections in New York, Berlin, and Paris. These miniatures exhibit structural and compositional similarities. Within gold-bordered rectangular frames, textual and visual elements coexist, with a dramatic central scene designed to intensify the narrative. From the ground upward, the scenes are rendered in layers: a "garden of paradise" in shades of green, mountain ranges in pastel tones, and a "sky" painted in blue.

At the heart of the composition, Prophet Abraham is seated on a golden throne, with the figure of Gabriel—portrayed as a winged human—positioned directly across from him. On the right side of the scene, King Nimrod and local spectators are depicted atop towers, further enhancing the dramatic narrative. Elements such as depictions of fire and catapult mechanisms are intricately and lavishly rendered with gold embellishments in the New York and Berlin manuscripts, whereas the Paris manuscript presents these elements with a more simplified aesthetic.

The production date of both the New York and Berlin manuscripts—1577—suggests that these works were likely created by the same group of artists or by artists influenced by one another, as evidenced by their shared design schemas. Both manuscripts display meticulous craftsmanship, extensive use of gold, and a refined compositional approach, indicative of their careful production within royal ateliers. The Paris manuscript, by contrast, was produced later in 1595 and departs from the detailed and aesthetically sophisticated classical style, adopting a more modest approach. The craftsmanship in the Paris manuscript—characterized by less precise rendering of figures and a restrained use of gold and color—suggests that it may have been created in a commercial workshop with more limited financial resources. In miniature art, it is well known that works were produced collectively in royal ateliers or commercial workshops. Within this context, shared compositional schemas that circulated among artist groups facilitated the reinterpretation of the same narratives with similar arrangements across different manuscripts. This phenomenon explains both the compositional parallels observed among the three manuscripts and the Paris manuscript's production as a more simplified version.

The Gabriel figures in the New York and Berlin manuscripts reflect the distinctive characteristics of the Qazvin and Shiraz styles, respectively. In the New York manuscript, the Gabriel figure embodies the refined detailing and elegance associated with the Qazvin style. He is depicted with a long neck, a small head, and slender body proportions—key features that convey aesthetic grace and visual harmony. The use of lapis lazuli tones, gold embellishments, and intricate patterns in Gabriel's garments emphasizes his spiritual status. The transitions of white, gold, blue, and red on the wings, combined with fine brushwork on the feathers, highlight the rich decorative sensibility of the Qazvin tradition. Gabriel's extended hand and outstretched wing visually reinforce the theme of active divine intervention.

In the Berlin manuscript, the Gabriel figure displays the defining characteristics of the Shiraz style. Rounded facial features, rosy cheeks, and vivid colors are especially prominent. Gabriel is shown in a composed and resolute posture, with closed wings and hands extended in a gesture of aid. This pose effectively communicates themes of divine guidance and protection. The stylized fabric patterns—featuring swan motifs—in his garments reflect the ornamental vocabulary of the Shiraz style, while the harmonious tones and meticulous detailing enhance the figure's aesthetic richness. Additionally, the presence of golden clouds and richly rendered natural elements—hallmarks of the Shiraz tradition—elevate the composition surrounding Gabriel.

Although the Gabriel figure in the Paris manuscript was also produced in Qazvin, its later production date is reflected in a simpler execution that diverges from the more elaborate approaches of the classical style. The use of gold-colored tones in the garments, rather than actual gold leaf, and the blue-to-white transitions on the wings retain a visual connection to the other two manuscripts but lack their aesthetic intensity. While Gabriel still serves to emphasize the central narrative by extending a helping hand, the absence of compositional intricacy and the overall weaker craftsmanship suggest that the Paris manuscript may have been produced in a lower-budget commercial workshop.

References

- And, M. (1998). *Minyatürlerle Osmanlı İslam mitologyası*. Akbank Yayınları.
- Budu, M. (2020). Türkçe Kısasü'l-Enbiyâ tercümeleri ve Ebû İshâk İbrâhîm b. el-Mansûr b. Halefî'l-Müzekkir en-Nisâbüri'nin *Kısasü'l-Enbiyâ*'sının Türkçe tercümesi. *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi (TUDED)*, 60(1), 71–95.
- Çağman, F., & Tanındı, Z. (1979). *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi İslam minyatürleri*. Tercüman Yayınları.
- Çolak, A. (2012). Kur'an ve hadislerde melek inancı. *Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1(1), 35–71.
- Erbaş, A. (2012). *Melekler âlemi / İlahi dinlerde melek inancı*. Nun Yayınları.
- Erbaş, A. (2004). Melek. *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (C. 29, ss. 40-42). Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları.
- Güney, G. (2017). Safevî Şiraz dönemi özelliği gösteren bazı Kur'an-ı Kerim nüshalarının serlevha tezhipleri. *Journal of Academic Social Research*, 5(43), 133–153.
- Harman Ö. F. (2000). İbrâhîm. *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (C.21, ss. 272-273). Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları.
- İnal, G. (1995). *Türk minyatür sanatı (Başlangıcından Osmanlılara kadar)*. Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayınları.
- Kaplan, N. (2013). *Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Hamidiye 980 numaralı Kısas-ı Enbiyâ nüshası ve tasvirleri* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Pamukkale Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.
- Karacabey, S. (2012). *Cebraîl ile yirmi üç yıl: Cebraîl ve Hz. Muhammed (S.A.S.)*. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları.
- Karataş, A. (2013). *Kısas-ı Enbiyâ peygamber kıssaları (İnceleme-tenkitli metin-tıpkı basım)*. Türk Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı.
- Karataş, A. (2018). Türk İslam kültür ve edebiyatında Kısas-ı Enbiyâ türü. *Diyanet İlmî Dergi*, 49(3), 83–111.
- Milstein, R., et al. (1999). *Stories of the prophets: Illustrated manuscripts of Qisas al-Anbiya*. California: Mazda Publishers.
- Özalan, İ. (2010). *Bizans sanatında melek tasvirleri* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, Güzel Sanatlar Enstitüsü.
- Özbek, D. (1990). Çağdaş semavi ve ilahi dinlerde meleklerin özellikleri. *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 3, 297–330.
- Serdar, M. (2008). Semavi dinlerde dört büyük melek (Cebraîl, Mikail, İsrâfil, Azrail). *Erciyes Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 13(2), 227–245.
- Serdar, M. (2009). Hıristiyanlık ve İslâm'da meleklerin varlık ve kısımları (angelojik bir mukayese denemesi). *Bilimname*, 17, 139–164.
- Sever Demir, S., & Adıgüzel Toprak, F. (2020). Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) *Kısas-ı Enbiyâ*'sında mi'rac konulu minyatürler. *İdil Sanat ve Dil Dergisi*, 76, 1855–1870.
- Sever, S. (2020). *Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) "Kısas-ı Enbiyâ" adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar* [Unpublished art proficiency thesis]. Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Güzel Sanatlar Enstitüsü.

Shahmari, S. (2014). *Osmanlı ve İnan minyatürlerinde figür anlayışının etnografik açıdan incelenmesi* [Unpublished master thesis]. Atatürk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

Şahin, S. (2002). Kısas-ı Enbiyâ. *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 25, 495, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları.

Şani, A. (2016). *İshak b. Nisâbüri'nin Kısas-ı Enbiyâ'sının beş minyatürlü nüshasının incelenmesi* [Unpublished master thesis]. İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

Yeşilyurt, T. (2018). Kur'an'da cinler, melekler ve şeytan. *Kastamonu Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2, 921.

Yüksel, C. (2018). *İslam tasvirlerinden örneklerle melek ikonografisi (XII. –XV. yüzyıl)* [Unpublished master thesis]. Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

URL 1. Retrieved November 2, 2025, from <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2028%3A12&version=NIV>

Image References List

Image 1: *Angel Gabriel Delivering the Command to Recite*, from Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, by Rashid al-Din Fazlullah, 1306–1307, University of Edinburgh Library Heritage Collections. No. 20, folio 221. Retrieved November 7, 2025, from <https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/media/book/showAllPagesThumbnail?mid=UoEsha%7E4%7E4%7E64742%7E103064&os=200>

Image 2: *The Ascension (Mi'raj) of Prophet Muhammad*, Gabriel depicted, from Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, by Rashid al-Din Fazlullah, 1306–1307, University of Edinburgh Library Heritage Collections. No. 20, folio 202. Retrieved October 1, 2025, from <https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/media/book/showAllPagesThumbnail?mid=UoEsha%7E4%7E4%7E64742%7E103064&os=200>

Image 3: *Gabriel Carries Muhammad Over the Mountains*, from *Mi'rāj-nāma*, 1360–1370, Tabriz (Topkapı Palace Museum, H.2154). Retrieved October 1, 2025, from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/96/Gabriel_carries_Muhammad_over_the_Mountains._Miraj-nama._1360-1370%2C_Tabriz_%28Topkapi%2C_H.2154%29.jpg

Image 4: *Hunt Scene in the Makhzan al-Asrar (Treasury of Secrets)*, folio from the *Khamsa (Quintet)* of Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209), Iran, Qazvin, Safavid Empire, c. 1570 CE. Retrieved October 1, 2025, from <https://sites.smith.edu/about-face-islamic-art/the-khamsa-qazvin-and-tabriz/>

Image 5: *Courtiers Present Gifts to a Ruler*, Safavid Shiraz, Iran, c. 1560. Retrieved October 1, 2025, from <https://www.christies.com/lot/courtiers-present-gifts-to-a-ruler-safavid-5668133/?from=salesummary&intObjectID=5668133&lid=1>

Image 6: *The New York Manuscript, Binding, Zahriye Page, Title Page*, Sever, S. (2020). *Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) "Kısas-ı Enbiyâ" adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar* (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p. 73-75.

Image 7: *The New York Manuscript Of "Qisas al-Anbiya"*, The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," Folio 23v, (Sever, S. (2020). *Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) "Kısas-ı Enbiyâ" adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar* (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p. 185.

- Image 8:** *The New York Manuscript Of “Qisas al-Anbiya”, The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," Folio 23v, Sever, S. (2020). Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) “Kıyas-ı Enbiyâ” adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p.186.*
- Image 9:** *The Berlin Manuscript, Binding, Zahriye Page, Title Page, Sever, S. (2020). Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) “Kıyas-ı Enbiyâ” adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p. 54-57.*
- Image 10:** *The Berlin Manuscript of “Qisas al-Anbiya”. The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," Folio 32v, , Sever, S. (2020). Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) “Kıyas-ı Enbiyâ” adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p. 177.*
- Image 11:** *The Berlin Manuscript of “Qisas al-Anbiya”. The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire and Rescued by Gabriel," Folio 32v Detail of Gabriel, Drawing of Gabriel, Sever, S. (2020). Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) “Kıyas-ı Enbiyâ” adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p. 178.*
- Image 12:** *The Paris Manuscript, Binding, Zahriya Page, Title Page, Sever, S. (2020). Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) “Kıyas-ı Enbiyâ” adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p. 67-69.*
- Image 13:** *The Paris Manuscript Of “Qisas al-Anbiya”, The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire," Folio 31v, Sever, S. (2020). Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) “Kıyas-ı Enbiyâ” adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p. 181.*
- Image 14:** *The Paris Manuscript Of “Qisas al-Anbiya”, The scene of "Prophet Abraham Being Thrown into the Fire," Folio 31v, Detail Of Gabriel, Drawing Of Gabriel, Sever, S. (2020). Nisâbüri'nin (Sa'lebî) “Kıyas-ı Enbiyâ” adlı eserindeki minyatürlerde melek figürü ve özgün tasarımlar (Art Proficiency Thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, p. 182.*