

The Absence of Damnation & Hell in Other Avestan Texts

Many translators of the Gathas ~ both Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians ~ read into certain Gatha verses the dual paradigm of heaven and hell as places of reward and punishment in the afterlife ~ influenced perhaps by certain Pahlavi texts, and the mind-set of most dominant religions of today. This paradigm is so firmly fixed in the minds of people today when they think of 'religion', that it (inaccurately) colors translations and interpretations of pre-existing ancient texts.

If we want to understand the Gathas we need to understand their words and ideas in the framework of the Avestan mind-set ~ not the Pahlavi mind-set, nor the mind-sets of religions which are dominant today, none of which existed when Zarathushtra composed the Gathas.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate, with evidence, that the dual symmetry of heaven/hell, reward/punishment, salvation/damnation, in an afterlife, did not exist in any of the (well-known) Avestan texts (written during Avestan times), and indeed was alien to the Avestan mind-set.

True, there are material differences between Zarathushtra's teachings and the religion(s) of his Avestan culture (which, some centuries after Zarathushtra, were syncretized with his teachings, resulting in a religion that was different in many respects from Zarathushtra's envisionment),¹ but there is no difference between Zarathushtra and his culture, on the absence of the dual paradigm of heaven/hell, reward/punishment, or salvation/damnation in the afterlife.

In navigating the evidence it may be useful to know that in Darmesteter's translation, titles of the Avestan *Yashts* are in Pahlavi (because such *Yashts* were so identified when recited as part of the ritual during Pahlavi times and later). However, the *Yashts* themselves, in their entirety, are in the YAv. language, composed at various time periods during YAv. times. For example, the title *Aban Yasht*, is Pahlavi even though the word *Aban* does not appear in this *Yasht*, which celebrates the Avestan spirit of the waters, Ardvi Sura Anahita, and so on.

The focus of the Avestan mind-set was on this life ~ not the afterlife. Even the 'deities' (for want of a more accurate word) of the Avestan culture were the spiritual essences of material things that were considered important in their (material) lives ~ a mind-set which the Avestan people derived from their Indo-Iranian heritage. To give a few examples, fire (Av. *ātar-* Ved. *agni*) was both the material fire, and also its spiritual essence, (a 'deity'). The haoma plants (Av. *haoma* Ved. *soma*) were both the material plants (from which the drink was made), and also their spiritual essence, (a 'deity'). The "contract" (Av. *miθra-*, Ved. *mitra-*) was an important aspect of life in a time when survival often depended on the alliances or contracts between families or clans or tribes. And the contract (a material concept and action) generated the idea of its spiritual essence ~ the deity Mithra (in YAv. texts). The star, Tishtrya was a material star whose ascendance in the night sky signaled the advent of the rainy season (thus preventing drought), and it was also the spiritual essence of the star, the 'deity' Tishtrya who was thought to battle the demon of drought et cetera. So in the mind-set of Zarathushtra's culture, the material and the spiritual were not seen as antithetical ~ there was no disconnect between the two.

However, in the Avestan mind-set, these spiritual essences were conceptualized as having human forms (often described as physically beautiful)² and also human natures, which included qualities that were both beneficial and harmful, kind and cruel, peaceful and violent, generous and vengeful.³

But their powers far exceeded those of human beings and were not limited to the material spheres of their spiritual essences. In essence, they were like human beings but greatly magnified in their abilities.

This mind-set existed before, during, and long after, Zarathushtra's time, when other Avestan 'deities' (or spiritual essences) also evolved from this mind-set ~ some of them evolving from concepts in the Gathas, where some concepts are allegories, but later were thought of as living entities ~ the spiritual essences of such concepts. To name a few examples of such Gatha concepts which later came to be thought of as spiritual essences (as the meanings of their names indicate), Ashi Vanguhi 'good reward'; Chisti 'understanding'; Sraosha 'listening' ('hearing /implementing the Word of Wisdom); the Amesha Spenta (divine qualities ~ some individually mentioned a few times as allegories in the Gathas);⁴ ~ all originally concepts or qualities that later came to be thought of as the spiritual essence of the particular concept ~ to be worshipped (or celebrated').

Today, the notion of a 'deity' is quite different. It is that of a 'God' whose being or identity is individual, His own, not derived from anything, separate and apart from everything else (except for mystical schools of thought which exist even in the dominant religions of our time). Today's mind-set of a 'deity' does not fit the Avestan mind-set of spiritual essences of material things. But because these 'spiritual essences' were objects of worship, through various rituals, 'deity' is the closest English equivalent I can think of. But we need to remember that the 'deities' of the Avestan mind-set were derived from this life ~ the material existence.

That the Avestan mind-set was focused on *this* life, is also demonstrated in the YAv. texts which are full of the vitality and the enjoyments of life (in their times) ~ winning battles, riding horses, chariot racing, physical comforts, wealth-generating cattle, plentiful crops, seasonal festivals, sons who were successful (and self-sufficient!),⁵ good health, prosperity, strong super heroes who battled and defeated the 'bad guys', ~ and other such enjoyments. And these texts also show a strong desire to avert the 'bad' things in *this* life ~ defeats in battle, drought, wild animals, sickness, death, poverty, lack of children, and the other calamities that afflicted their lives.

The YAv. paradigm for gaining benefits and avoiding calamities.

The YAv. solution for getting such good things and avoiding such bad things was a model based on human experience. Just as one might attempt to win the good will (or avert the displeasure) of a human ruler by offering gifts, so also ~ these 'deities' (or spiritual essences) were 'worshipped' or 'appeased' with extravagant material offerings ~ rituals, libations, hundreds and thousands of horses, cattle, lambs, etc., (delivered to their priests, naturally) in hopes of getting from these 'deities' the many good things the worshippers desired in *this* life, and avoiding the many bad things they feared in *this* life.

Indeed, in an effort to validate the power of a particular deity to deliver success and other good things to those who pleased the deity with such gifts, the priestly composers of several of the Yashts (in almost identical language) included a long list of legendary ancient heroes who (purportedly) gave thousands and hundreds of horses, cattle, and lambs to the 'deity' celebrated in each such Yasht and as a result obtained from that deity the successes for which each such hero was famous in legend ~ thereby implying that it was that particular deity who was responsible for his legendary success (no attempt was made to explain how each of these deities claimed to be the source of the same good

results). Here is one example from the *Aban Yasht* involving the legendary Indo-Iranian hero Yima (Ved. Yama; Persian Jam/ Jamshid) who in this Yasht is supposed to have asked Ardvi Sura Anahita (the spiritual essence of the waters) for the rule for which he was famous in legend, (although other YAv. texts claimed that Yima's rulership was given to him by other named pre-Zarathushtrian deities, and in one text by Ahura Mazda Himself).⁶

"To her did Yima Khshaeta, the good shepherd, offer up a sacrifice ... with a hundred male horses, a thousand oxen, ten thousand lambs.

He begged of her a boon, saying: Grant me this O good, most beneficent Ardvi Sura Anahita! that I may become the sovereign lord of all countries, of Daevas and men, ... that I may take from the Daevas both riches and welfare, both fatness and flocks, both weal and Glory. Ardvi Sura Anahita granted him that boon ..." *Aban Yasht*, Yt. 5.26 - 27, Darmesteter translation.⁷

We see identical appeals from legendary heroes, including Yima, in almost identical words (as if copied and pasted) in other Yashts, such as the *Gosh Yasht*, the *Ram*⁸ *Yasht*, the *Ashi Yasht*. Presumably, the priests of each of these deities wanted to claim Yima's famous rule (and the successes of other legendary heroes) as the gift of the particular deity they worshipped.

The YAv. transition from requests to compulsion.

As the religions of these deities became more institutionalized, and rituals and sacrifices became a significant source of wealth and power for the religious establishment, the paradigm shifted (in the worship of some deities) from requests (supported by the incentive of gifts), to compulsion (supported by a system of good rewards and punishments). In return for obedience to the requirements of expensive rituals (and also for not telling lies in the *Mihir Yasht* ~ a lie to mithra essentially being a lie to the contract ~ breaking a contract),⁹ good things were promised as a reward.¹⁰ And very bad things were threatened as punishment for failing to obey and worship as specified.¹¹

The 'good' rewards, mostly were material successes in *this* life, with a few references to a (spiritually) good existence. The 'bad' rewards were *all* in mortal life, in all the surviving YAv. texts which were written during YAv. times (detailed below) ~ thus echoing the same asymmetrical treatment of the 'good' and 'bad' rewards that we find in the Gathas ~ except that material rewards only incidental ~ they are not the main rewards as in YAv. texts.¹²

Zarathushtra's divergence from the foregoing paradigms.

The advent of Zarathushtra brought major changes to the 'religious' perceptions of his culture including changes to their paradigms of worship and material rewards.¹³

The object of worship. Zarathushtra departed from the perceptions of his culture in that he did not see the divine as multiple spiritual essences which arose out of multiple material things. In the Gathas he speaks of one spiritual essence which generated (birthed) all that exists,¹⁴ implying that the Divine is immanent is all that exists ~ corroborated by the use of material metaphors for the Divine and some of its qualities amesha spenta.¹⁵ And the nature of the divine ~ of what is worthy of worship ~ is not anthropomorphic with both bad and good human qualities. The nature of the Divine is the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), wholly beneficial (*spanta-*), wholly good (*vahišta-*), wholly enlightened (Wisdom, *mazdā-*).¹⁶

The way to worship. Zarathushtra also departed from the perceptions of his culture in that he rejected worshipping with bribes of hundreds and thousands and ten thousands of horses, cattle, and lambs, or with expensive and elaborate rituals. In the Gathas, he worships the Divine by thinking, speaking and acting in accordance with the qualities that make a being Divine ~ in accordance with the true (wholly good) order of existence, its comprehension good thinking, its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action, its good rule ~ a worship that consists of each choice in thought, word and action, in the material matrix of mortal existence. So in his way of worship, the more we make our day to day choices in accord with the true order of existence ("truth" for short), the more truth-possessing (*ašavan-*) we become. Thus his path is the incremental attainment of the true order of existence (which is also his notion of 'reward'). A profoundly new way to worship in his time period (and in ours!).

The reward for so worshipping. Zarathushtra also departs from the perceptions of his culture in his notion of the 'good' reward for so worshipping in that his emphasis is not on material gains and successes. Zarathushtra's perception of the 'good reward' (*aši vaṇuhi*) for taking the path of truth, is truth itself ~ the incremental, and eventually the complete attainment of the true (good) order of existence and its component parts (*amesha spenta*) ~ its comprehension good thinking, its beneficial embodiment, its good rule ~ an existence which is the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness (a 'most-good existence' *ahu- vahišta-*) ~ which is his notion of 'salvation'.¹⁷

Because the attainment of this 'good reward' is incremental, most of it necessarily occurs in mortal existence. We create paradise (incompletely) in our state of being, and in the environment we generate, by our good choices in thought, word and action ~ in 'this life' while incomplete. The eventual complete attainment of the true order of existence (a most good existence *ahu- vahišta-*) is the wholly beneficial-sacred way of being (*spānta- mainyu-*) the existence of the Divine ~ at which time the reason for mortality ceases, and we 'cross the bridge' from a state of mortality to a non-mortal state of being ~ non-deathness (*amərətāt-*) a Divine quality. Thus, the completion of this process of spiritual evolution brings into the picture the idea of an afterlife ~ a perfected existence; one that is wholly good; an existence no longer bound by mortality; the existence of the Divine.

The reward for failing to so worship. Zarathushtra also departs from the perceptions of his culture in his notions of what happens for failing to so worship, in that such failure does not result in all the physical, material, calamities promised by (the priests of) the 'deities' in YAv. texts. But his thought coincides with that of his culture, in that the notion of damnation in a hell of tortures in an afterlife is conspicuous by its absence from both the Gathas,¹⁸ and also all (surviving) YAv. texts (that were written during YAv. times). In Zarathushtra's thought, the reward for making choices that are not in accord with the true order of existence, its good comprehension, its beneficial embodiment, its good rule, the beneficial way of being, is also a state of being ~ in mortal existence ~ because it creates within ourselves and around us, an existence that possesses-untruth (*dragvant-*) ~ indeed the Av. words *aṅgra- mainyu-* mean a 'harmful, hurtful, pain-causing, inimical way of being'.¹⁹ And here, let us take a moment to recall the qualities which in the Gathas are considered 'bad/evil'. They all are the products of wrongful choices ~ falsehood (the lie), fury, predatory violence, tyranny, bondage, cruelty, harming, injuring, theft, murder et cetera.²⁰

So wrongful choices lead to a wrongful state of being in mortal existence ~ a state of being that is not in accord with the true order of existence, which results in the soul being unable to 'cross the

bridge' from mortality to an existence not bound by mortality ~ non-deathness (*amərətāt-*).²¹ In Zarathushtra's thought, 'hell' is a state of being in mortal existence, in which we experience the consequences of our own wrongful choices ~ reaping what we sow ~ but also the mutual, loving help which enables us to break cycles of revenge, hatred, and other wrongful choices, enabling the learning experiences (over a long, long period of time) through which our preferences change.

In this way, each unit of existence evolves ~ in the matrix of mortal existence ~ from a mix of good and evil preferences to a state of being that is increasingly more good, more beneficial, until eventually it attains completely, the true (wholly good) order of existence (*aša-*) ~ which enables it to 'cross the bridge' from mortality to a state of non-deathness (*amərətāt-*). Therefore, in his thought, the true order of existence (*aša-*) is eventually attained completely by everyone. That is why, when speaking of the law of consequences, Zarathushtra says that it is implemented through a **beneficial way of being** and **good thinking**, and the end result it delivers is the **good**, and **satisfaction** to all ~ to those who choose correctly and also to those who choose wrongly.²²

His teachings do indeed include the idea of an all-good, non-mortal existence (an afterlife). But in his paradigm, there is no place for the concept of damnation and punishment in a non-mortal afterlife, for wrongful conduct in this life ~ which explains the total absence of 'hell' as a place of punishment in all available YAv. texts which were composed during YAv. times (detailed below).

Zarathushtra's paradigm is linear and certain. It is the progression or evolution of existence from a mixed state of being to one that is all good ~ the most-good existence (*ahu- vahišta-*, one of his terms for paradise). This paradigm is reflected in later YAv. texts in their notion of the healing of existence [*frašō.kərəiti*] which also is a certain, assured end for all that exists.²³ This Avestan mind-set is not consistent with the dual symmetry of salvation/damnation, reward/punishment, heaven/hell, which appears in most dominant religions of today (and a few Pahlavi texts), and which have colored various translations of the Gathas and YAv. texts ~ by Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians alike.

In the later YAv. texts, the bad rewards are 'punishments' in this life (detailed in preceding footnotes above). But there are also a few mentions of the bad reward as '**worst existence** (*acišta- ahu-*),²⁴ (echoing the Gathas) ~ a description which even later Pahlavi texts call "**dushahu**" which Haug and E. W. West translate as 'hell'. It is common for Pahlavi texts to use forms of Avestan words. And Pahlavi "**dushahu**" is Avestan *duš.ahu-* 'bad existence'. In Avestan, *ahu-* means 'existence', and *duš-/duž-* is a prefix which means 'bad' (as in Av. *duš.šyaoθana-* 'bad actions'; *duž.manah-* 'bad thought'; *duž.vacah-* 'bad word' to give a few examples). By definition, the '**worst existence** (*acišta- ahu-*) is a state of being, not a place. In another chapter I have detailed the evidence that in the Gathas, there is no place of punishment ~ 'hell' ~ in the afterlife.²⁵ Let us now consider the evidence of other Avestan texts.

The absence of damnation, punishment, 'hell' in the afterlife, in other Avestan texts.

How does one prove a negative ?! By doing a careful search, and giving its results. Those who disagree, need to come up with evidence ~ citing chapter and verse.

The absence of 'hell' in Gathic Avestan texts (other than the Gathas).

The texts composed in GAv. (other than the Gathas) are,
the *Ahuna Vairya* (Yatha Ahu Vairyo Y27.13),
the *Asha Vahishta* (Ashem Vohu Y27.14),
the *A Airyema Ishyo* (Y54.1), and
the *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, (YHapt.35.3 through YHapt.41.6),

There is no evidence in any of these texts of damnation or 'hell' as a place of punishment to which the wicked go after death ~ not even a plea to be saved from such a fate.

The absence of 'hell' in YAv. texts.

All the Avestan texts which are not in GAv. are in YAv. (including a few passages in archaic YAv.). The following are all the (surviving) YAv. texts which have been translated in SBE (comprising all major texts and some fragments).

There is no evidence in any of these texts of damnation or 'hell' as a place of punishment to which the wicked go after death ~ not as a punishment for failing to worship with rituals, (plenty of punishments in this life for failing to do so as a preceding footnote demonstrates, but not in the afterlife), not as a punishment for intrinsic wrongdoing, not even as a plea to be saved from such punishment in the afterlife,²⁶

~ not in the YAv. *Yasnas*,

~ not in the *Visperad*,

~ not in the *Gahs*,

~ not in the *Afringans*,

~ not in the *Sirozahs* (I and II),

~ not in any of the regular *Yashts* (except for interpretive translations which read into YAv. passages, words which are not in the Avestan texts),²⁷

~ not in the *Nyaishes*,

~ not in any of the surviving YAv. Fragments, which Mills calls,

Miscellaneous Fragments I through IX, and

~ not in any of the surviving YAv. Fragments, which Darmesteter calls,

Yasht Fragment 21, and *Yasht Fragment 23* (also called the *Afrin Paighambar Zartusht*).

Scant beginnings of 'bad' rewards as a place of punishment in an afterlife.

In certain texts ~ written in faulty YAv. indicating that they were written after YAv. times, when the religious establishment was no longer fluent in Avestan ~ we see the scant beginnings of the idea of unpleasant consequences in the afterlife.

We see this in 2 YAv. Fragments which Darmesteter has translated, but he also notes that *Fragment 24* is linguistically corrupt, indicating that these Fragments (or at least some of them or parts of them) were composed long after Avestan times, when the priests were no longer fluent in Avestan.²⁸

Geldner does not give the YAv. text of any *Fragment* text, so of necessity, I can only give you Darmesteter's translation. For convenience he identifies these Fragment as *Yashts*, although he

acknowledges that they are not true or traditional Yashts,²⁹ (which normally are in praise of some 'deity').

Fragment 24 (also called the *Vishtasp Yasht*).

In *Fragment 24* the 'bad' reward in an afterlife is described only as "bad treatment" ~ for those who displease the priests. In many sections of this *Fragment* the author has Zarathushtra speaking to King Vishtaspa, giving him blessings and advice. But in other sections, including §§ 47 - 48 the speakers (pl.) are not identified, (indicating that this *Fragment* may have been collated from different sources). The (purported) speakers here may be the Amesha Spenta (referred to as living entities giving good rewards in the preceding section) or possibly other unidentified deities. The words in round parentheses are Darmesteter's additions (although he does not place all added words into round parentheses).

"... whichever of two men goes quicker to perform a sacrifice (to Ahura); but if he chooses to perform the sacrifice and prayer to us not in the right way, he does not wield the right power, he will not reign." *Fragment 24.47*, Darmesteter translation. Here the 'bad' reward is only in this (material) life, and seems to be addressed to a ruler or one who wants to be a ruler.

"He will receive bad treatment in the next world, though he has been the sovereign of a country with good horses to ride and good chariots to drive..." *Fragment 24.48*, Darmesteter translation.³⁰ Here, the 'bad' reward in the next life is only unspecified "bad treatment". Darmesteter's translation does not identify the 'next world' ~ neither as a non-mortal afterlife (*aməratāt-*), nor as a mortal afterlife (from which the soul will return to a material existence to continue the perfecting process.³¹

In these §§ 47 and 48, not only did sacrifices have to be performed, but they had to be performed in the "right way" ~ which of course only priests would know how to do. A rather obvious money making device for the religious establishment. So here, the 'bad' reward was also a control mechanism for the religious establishment, to protect their power and wealth.

YAv. *Fragment 22*.

I do not know if *Fragment 22* is grammatically corrupt, (indicating it was written after YAv. times). In *Fragment 22*, 'hell' has become a place, indicating that it is a late YAv text. Its unpleasantness consists of suffering for 3 nights after death, and then cold, stink, darkness and bad food. Since 'light' is the most-frequently used symbol and metaphor for the true (good) order of existence (*aša-*), an enlightened state of being, it is easy to understand why 'darkness' is the symbol and metaphor for its opposite state of being. And indeed we see the metaphors of 'darkness' (as an unenlightened state of being) and 'bad food' (as the vices which poison our souls) used in the Gathas.³² But by the time *Fragment 22* was composed (many centuries later) it is doubtful that the author was aware that these terms were originally metaphors.

In this *Fragment 22*, what happens to a wicked person after death is the mirror opposite of what (this text says) happens to a good person after death, in almost every detail.³³ And the text seems to contain different (and inconsistent) strands of traditional knowledge.³⁴ The text is composed in the usual form of (purported) questions by Zarathushtra and (purported) answers by Ahura Mazda ~ a

format used by the composers of many YAv. texts in order to give their own views Zarathushtra's teachings and thus clothe their own views in what they hoped would be the unassailable authority of Ahura Mazda (which tells us how popular and successful Zarathushtra's teachings must have been). Specifically, the details of what happens to the soul of a "wicked" person after death are covered in §§ 19 - 36 of *Fragment 22* which are summarized as follows from Darmesteter's translation.

§ 19 establishes that what follows happens to the soul of a wicked person.

In §§ 20 - 24 on the first three nights after death, the soul of the deceased sits near the head of its own "skull", and "... tastes as much of suffering as the whole of the living world can taste." The text does not say that this suffering is physical, or caused by any agency. It seems to be a suffering of the spirit, and its duration is for the first three nights after death.

§§ 25 - 32, "At the end of the third night, ... when the dawn appears, it seems to the soul ... as if it were brought amidst snow and stench ... the foulest-scented of all the winds in the world... it seems to the soul of the wicked man as if he were inhaling that wind ...",

§ 33 says "The first step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Evil-Thought Hell; The second step ... laid him in Evil-Word Hell; The third step ... laid him in the Evil-Deed Hell"; The fourth step ... laid him in the Endless Darkness". There is no Av. word in § 33 which corresponds with Darmesteter's word "Hell" repeated three times.³⁵ However, the text does state that the three steps evil-thought, evil-word, and 'evil-deed' lead to 'endless darkness'. So we have an incremental path here of evil thoughts, words and actions leading to an unenlightened state of being (darkness). Now, such bad thoughts words, actions, and their resulting dark state of being would, of necessity, have to occur in mortal existence ~ i.e. before death. But in this YAv. Fragment, all four steps occur on the fourth day after death, indicating perhaps some confusion in transmitting the original ideas.³⁶

In §§ 34 - 35 the wicked soul is called a 'fiend' (which we also see in the very late *Vendidad*). Here, the soul is questioned by "one of the wicked who departed before him saying 'How didst thou perish, O wicked man? How didst thou come, O fiend! from the abodes full of cattle and full of the wishes of enjoyments of love? From the material world into the world of the Spirit?... How long did thy suffering last?'" Whereupon "Angra Mainyu, the lying one, said: Ask him not what thou askest him, who has just gone the dreary way, full of fear and distress, where the body and the soul part from one another'."

In § 36 the only punishment decreed by Angra Mainyu (by then the Chief Devil) for the departed soul in 'hell', is "Let him eat of the food brought unto him, of poison and poisonous stench; this is the food, after he has perished, for the youth of evil thoughts, evil words, evil deeds, evil religion, after he has perished; this is the food for the fiendish woman, rich in evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds, evil religion, ill-principled, and disobedient to her husband."³⁷

And that comprises all the sections in *Fragment 22* dealing with what happens to the soul of the "wicked" person after death.³⁸ No torture or punishment other than suffering (of spirit) for 3 nights, and then darkness, cold, stink, and bad food ~ a far cry from the 'hell' of certain Pahlavi texts.³⁹

Going back to §§ 34 - 35, it seems strange that Angra Mainyu would be so solicitous of the soul who has come to 'hell', as to forbid other souls from asking him personal questions. But this entire

description is a mirror opposite ~ almost word for word ~ of an earlier description of what happens to a good soul (which I have detailed in another chapter),⁴⁰ where the good soul is similarly questioned by another good soul, and Ahura Mazda intervenes and says in effect ~ ask him not such questions because he has just come through a difficult transition from the material world to the existence of spirit. While such solicitude for the newly deceased soul might be expected of Ahura Mazda, one can only wonder at Angra Mainyu having the same solicitude, when in YAv. texts the harmful, hurtful, pain-causing, way of being *angra- mainyu-* is all-bad ~ having no 'good' qualities at all, as its very name indicates.⁴¹

It is possible that the original ms. (of *Fragment 22*) contained only a description of what happens to the soul of a 'good' person after death, and that §§ 19 - 36, describing what happens to the soul of a "wicked" person were added later ~ during times when everything 'good' had to have its opposite. I surmise this may be so because if we compare this YAv. *Fragment 22* with YAv. *Fragment 24* (the *Vishtasp Yasht*) we see that both of them have an almost identical description of what happens to the soul of a 'good' person after death, but YAv. *Fragment 24* (the *Vishtasp Yasht*) is totally silent about what happens to the soul of a "wicked" person after death. Does *Fragment 24* the *Vishtasp Yasht* represent the YAv. view that 'hell' was only in mortal existence, and only 'heaven' was in a non-mortal afterlife? Or does it just reflect an incomplete *Fragment*? We have no way of knowing.

The Vendidad.

All references here to the *Vendidad* are to the Avestan *Vendidad*, and not to its Pahlavi version, known as the Pahlavi *Vendidad* (which according to E. W. West does indeed describe punishment in an afterlife ~ 'hell').⁴²

The *Vendidad* appears (to me, at least) to be a compilation of texts by different authors on various unrelated subjects.⁴³ We know that it is full of grammatical errors indicating that it was composed long after YAv. times when its composers were not fluent in Avestan.⁴⁴ Hintze thinks the *Vendidad* was written in the post-Achaemenian period,⁴⁵ which likely would have been long after the Avestan period.⁴⁶ And indeed, Darmesteter thought that at least some parts of it were written during early Sasanian times to counter the teachings of Mani,⁴⁷ (who lived around 216 - 276 C.E.). For purposes of this chapter, I call the *Vendidad* a YAv. text because it was written in (faulty) YAv. But the fact that it was written long after Avestan times explains why the mind-set of this text is so very different from the joyful, life-loving, Avestan mind-set that fills the YAv. texts (composed during YAv. times).

Those parts of the *Vendidad* which deal with

- (1) infractions of religious rules (most of which are not intrinsically 'wrong' ~ ethically or morally),
- (2) failures to go through elaborate cleansing rituals, and
- (3) failing to make atonements for breaking rules (with specified extravagant gifts),

are full of detailed and cruel 'punishments' in *this* life for doing prohibited acts, or failing to do required acts. All these punishments are in the form of whippings, flayings, killings,⁴⁸ threatened invasions of various parts of the (material) body by the demon(s) of defilement and other demons,⁴⁹ and other material calamities (chapter after tedious chapter).

But even at so late a time period (long after YAv. times), we see very little mention of punishment in the afterlife.

In one short passage of the *Vendidad* it states that the 'wicked' person becomes a demon himself after death ~ which is logical when you consider that the names of demons were vices,⁵⁰ so a wicked person who personified such vices, in effect 'became' a demon himself. And only a few short passages with not much detail specifically speak of an unpleasant place to which (so called) wrongdoers go in an afterlife. Indeed, one cannot truly appreciate how small a part any consequences in an afterlife ~ good or bad ~ play in the *Vendidad* until one reads through all its many, many sections which detail the cruel punishments exacted in *this* life as the consequences of violating the rules and requirements laid down by the greed-driven, power-driven (spiritually bankrupt) religious establishment of that time period.

Darmesteter sometimes inserts an implied 'hell' into passages which is not supported by any Avestan text or its context. And sometimes he interprets an Avestan word to mean 'hell' which is not supported by the actual meaning of the Avestan word. But in fairness, his translation is sometimes influenced by later Pahlavi commentaries which read the notion of 'hell' into these passages, as the footnoted examples show ~ so you can see for yourself whether such commentaries are justified by the Av. text. The Av. language was not well understood in Pahlavi times ~ the Sasanian empire started in about 200 C.E., approximately 500 + years after the defeat of the Achaemenian empire in 331 B.C.E.), by which time Avestan was already an ancient language.⁵¹

The authors of the *Vendidad* follow the usual technique found in other YAv. texts, of stating their own rules and ideas, in the form of questions (purportedly) asked by Zarathushtra and answers (purportedly) given by Ahura Mazda ~ rules that are not in the Gathas, are alien to its teachings, and not intrinsically 'wrong'.⁵² I itemize here, (and in footnotes) *all* the instances of punishment in the afterlife that are in the *Vendidad*, so that you can see how very few there are.

1. In Ch. 8 § 32, a wicked human is a demon before and after death. In the Gathas, the word 'daeva' meant a deity of Zarathushtra's culture. But because of the predatory practices of their priests (who acted in the names of these deities), these daevas and their priests are condemned in the Gathas. By the time the YAv. texts were composed, 'daeva' had come to mean 'demon'. In the *Vendidad* a man who violates certain sexual prohibitions is considered to be a Daeva (before and after death).

"...this is the man that is a Daeva before he dies, and becomes one of the unseen Daevas after death; ..." Ch. 8 § 32, SBE 4, pp. 101 - 102.

That's it. No punishment. No additional details about the afterlife.

2. In Ch. 5, § 62 *vahišta- ahu-* 'most good existence', and *acišta- ahu-* 'worst existence' (as well as the other ways of describing the 'bad' consequences) appear to be states of being. Or have they become places? And are they impliedly in an afterlife? Decide for yourself. Darmesteter interpretively translates these 2 phrases as "the happy realm" and "the dismal realm" respectively but that does not accord with the actual meaning of the Avestan words. There is no dispute amongst linguists today that in GAv. and in YAv., *ahu-* means 'existence, life' and *acišta-* is the superlative degree of *aka-* 'bad' or 'evil'. And in this passage of the *Vendidad*, the 'sin' which results in a dark, most-bad existence, consists of disobeying a mandate (not intrinsically 'wrong') which is not observed by any Zoroastrians today however orthodox. The translation is Darmesteter's except for the words in square brackets, which show the Avestan words from Geldner, which I have translated literally.

"§ 61 "Whosoever throws any clothing on a dead body, even so much as a maid lets fall in spinning, is not a pious man whilst alive, nor shall he, when dead, have a place in the happy realm [*nōiṭ bax šaiti vahištahe aṇhāuš*, literally when dead 'shall not have enjoyment of a most~good existence'].⁵³

§ 62 "He shall go away into the world of fiends [*ahūm ... drvatqm* literally, 'the existence of the false-ones'], into that dark world made of darkness [*tamaṇhaēnəm ... tamaṇhəm* literally 'dark-existence ... darkness'], the offspring of darkness [*tamasciθrəm*]. To that world, to the dismal realm [*acištai aṇuhe* 'to the worst existence'] you are delivered by your own doings, by your own souls, O sinners!" *Vendidad* Ch. 5 §§ 61 - 62.⁵⁴

It is interesting (is it not?) that even in this late, flawed text we still see an echo of the original (Gatha) idea of the consequence of wrongful choices being an existence that is false, dark (unenlightened), an existence that is *acišta- ahu-* 'the worst existence'.⁵⁵ Here, there is no specific mention that the most bad existence described is in an afterlife. But even if we interpret the most bad, dark existence of the disobedient man as extending to an afterlife, there is no torture. No physical punishment. And the disobedient man is called the offspring (or 'seed') of darkness [*tamasciθrəm*]. Think about that for a minute.

3. In Ch. 8, §§ 97 - 106 deal with how a man can be made clean, and atone for various actions which the priests declared were (physically) impure sins (including polluting water with a corpse), which atonements include cleansing rituals and whippings in *this* life (none of which would make the water clean), and chapter 8 concludes, with § 107 which states,

"This is the penalty, this is the atonement, which saves him who submits to it; he who does not submit to it, shall surely be an inhabitant in the mansion of the Druj [*drujō nmāne*]." Darmesteter translation; Avestan words from Geldner.⁵⁶

The phrase *drujō nmāne* is the YAv. version of the GAv. *drujō dāmāna-* the 'house of untruth' or the 'house of falsehood'. In the Gathas, 'house' is used as a metaphor for a state of being, and *drujō dāmāna-* the 'house of untruth' is a state of being that is intrinsically wrongful ~ a false, deceived, deluded, ignorant state of being ~ one that is not the true (correct, good) order of existence.⁵⁷ But in this part of the *Vendidad* the original Gatha idea was no longer understood, because the alleged 'sins' in this Ch. 8, § 97 - 106 have nothing to do with falsehood or lies, or wrongs (*druj-*). By the time of the *Vendidad* the word *druj-* had come to mean 'wicked' (one who does not obey the priests). In essence, here a man who fails to 'atone' for sins that are not intrinsically 'wrong', in that he refuses to submit to the horrific and humiliating penalties demanded by the religious establishment *in this life*, is threatened with going to a bad place ~ the house of the wicked ~ after death, with no details of punishment therein.

4. Ch. 14 § 18 has almost identical language as the passages above. In this chapter a person has to undergo 20,000 lashes (which could be converted to a cash fine ~ so the more lashes, the more lucrative the fine),⁵⁸ and has to give a long list of required gifts, to atone for killing a water dog, which I have footnoted,⁵⁹ so that you can see that all of them are inflicted in this life except for § 18 which reads as follows (Darmesteter is a bit free in his translation),

§ 18 "This is the atonement, this is the penalty that he shall undergo for the deed that he has done ... if he shall not undergo it, he shall fall down into the world of the wicked [*drujō nmāne*],

into that dark world, made of darkness, the offspring of darkness." Darmesteter translation, Avestan words are from Geldner.⁶⁰

Once again, there is no explicit mention of an afterlife. And the threat of going to a bad place (impliedly after death) is for failing to undergo punishments in this life, and make the gifts required for atonement.

5. Ch. 18, §§ 70 - 76 has a shorter list of penalties in this life than those listed in Ch. 14,⁶¹ but for doing a different forbidden act (having prohibited sexual intercourse with a woman), and concludes by saying that a person who does not atone by paying such penalties (in this life) will go to an existence of darkness.⁶² No other details.

6. In Ch. 13, §§ 8 - 9 we see a little more detail of the consequences of wrongdoing in the afterlife. Here, it states that whoever "smites" a shepherd's dog, a house dog, a vagrant dog, or a trained dog, will suffer the following consequences in the afterlife (in Darmesteter's somewhat free translation).

§ 8 "... his soul when passing to the other world [*parō.asnāi aṇuhe* literally 'to the future existence']⁶³ shall fly amid louder howling and fiercer pursuing than the sheep does when the wolf rushes upon it in the lofty forest.

[§ 9] No soul will come and meet his departing soul and help it through the howls and pursuit in the other world; nor will the dogs that keep the Chinvad bridge help his departing soul through the howls and pursuit in the other world." *Vendidad* Ch. 13, §§ 8 - 9, Darmesteter translation; Avestan words from Geldner.⁶⁴

Parenthetically, there is no mention of dogs at all in the YAv. *Fragment 22* regarding what happens to the soul of a deceased person - good or bad.

7. In Ch. 19, §§ 26 - 29 the author of these sections attempts to give information (using the usual format of Zarathushtra supposedly asking questions and Ahura Mazda supposedly answering them) about what happens to the soul in the afterlife. Here we see echoes of ideas from YAv. *Fragment 22*, but also differences. Here, the text of the *Vendidad* is somewhat confused and unclear (as you will see). The cause may have been either that the author received an incorrect transmission of earlier traditions, or that errors and omissions came in later, caused by scribal attempts to copy deteriorating manuscripts down through the centuries.⁶⁵ Specifically, in the extant mss. the (purported) questions and answers are as follows (in Darmesteter's somewhat free translation),

§ 26 "Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda ... Should I urge upon the godly man [*narəm aṣavanəm* 'the truth-possessing man'], ... upon the godly woman [*nāirikəm aṣaonīm* 'the truth-possessing woman'], ... upon the wicked [*drvatəm*] Daeva-worshipper who lives in sin, that they have once to leave behind them the earth made by Ahura, ... the water that runs, corn that grows, and the rest of their wealth?

Ahura Mazda answered: Thou shouldst, O holy [*aṣāum* 'truth-possessing' Zarathushtra."

§ 27 "O Maker of the material world ... where are the rewards given? Where does the rewarding take place? Where is the rewarding fulfilled? Whereto do men come to take the reward that, in their life in the material world, they have won for their souls?"

§ 28 "Ahura Mazda answered: When the man is dead, when his time is over, then the hellish evil-doing Daevas assail him; and when the third night is gone, when the dawn appears and brightens up, and makes Mithra, the god with beautiful weapons, reach the all-happy mountains, and the sun is rising:

§ 29 "Then the fiend, named Vizaresha,⁶⁶ carries off in bonds the souls of the wicked [*drvatqm*] Daeva-worshippers who live in sin. The soul enters the way made by Time, and open both to the wicked [*drvaite*] and to the righteous [*ašaone* 'truthful']. At the head of the Chinvad bridge, the holy bridge made by Mazda, they ask for their spirits and souls the reward for the worldly goods which they gave away here below."⁶⁷

The YAv. adjective *drvañt-* means "possessed by the Lie, lieful" (Skjaervo 2003), or as I would put it 'possessing untruth, falsehood'. Then follow several sections which describe the treatment accorded to the souls of the truthful.⁶⁸ But the above one sentence at the beginning of § 29 is the only description of what happens to the souls of the untruthful in the afterlife.

As for the confusion in these sections ~ as you can see (above) §§ 26 and 27 deal with both good and bad people in the plural. Yet § 28 says that when the man is dead, he is assailed by demons. If the intent here is that both the truthful and the untruthful are assailed by demons during the first three nights after death, then this text differs from the YAv. *Fragment 22* in which during the first three nights after death, the truthful suffer no adverse consequences, and even the untruthful are not said to be assailed by any demons. If the intent here is that only the untruthful are assailed by demons, then there are words missing in the text between § 27 and § 28. In addition, in § 29, the first sentence describes the end result of what happens to the souls of only the untruthful, whereas the rest of the section speaks of the souls of the untruthful and truthful entering the way made by time (a concept I have found in no YAv. text composed during YAv. times, and suggesting Zurvanism), and appearing at Chinvat bridge, where they ask for their respective rewards.

In any event, even setting aside the confusion, you can see that there is no real description of a 'hell' of punishment and torture in §§ 28 and 29 ~ just being assailed by demons for three nights (not limited to the 'bad'), and then being carried off by one of the demons (limited to the 'bad').

Conclusion.

In short, there are no mentions of a 'bad' reward in an afterlife in any YAv. text that was written during YAv. times (the language of which texts is not faulty).

And even texts composed after YAv. times (written in faulty YAv.) descriptions of a 'bad' reward in the afterlife are few indeed. And even in these, any mention of punitive tortures, is totally absent.

Some of the YAv. texts may have started out with an understanding of the metaphoric nature of certain Gatha descriptions of the 'bad' reward as a state of being in mortal existence ~ an existence of 'darkness' (unenlightened), with foul food (the vices that poison the soul), a deceived, deluded state of being (the 'house of untruth/deceit', 'house of worst thinking').⁶⁹ But as these descriptions were transmitted down through the centuries, especially following the loss of knowledge caused by the destruction of the Achaemenian culture, their metaphoric significance seems to have been lost, so that although these grammatically faulty YAv. texts repeated the Gatha descriptions of a 'most-bad existence' these metaphors were replaced (after YAv. times) by a belief (in some minds), of a

place of darkness, and poisonous food, to which were added cold and stink ~ reflecting what they found to be unpleasant or obnoxious in their own lives.

*Unidentified YAv. quotation in the Pahlavi/Pazand text Aogemadaeca,*⁷⁰

There is what purports to be a YAv. quotation embedded in a much later Pahlavi/Pazand text, the *Aogemadaeca*. But the YAv. source for this YAv. quotation is not identified. The quotation itself does not exist in any surviving Av. text and its reliability (as a quotation from a genuine YAv. text) cannot be ascertained.⁷¹ In this YAv. quotation, 'hell' is described as a harmful, hurtful, pain-causing [*aṅrāi*] pit, that is cruel, deceiving, in which a person cannot see, ~ of a dark existence [*aṅhāuš tamaṅhahe*], of a bad existence [*daožanḥahe*], which the all-destructive [*pouru.mahrkō*] Angra Mainyu [*aṅrō mainyuš*] made.⁷²

Now if we look past the imagery of these YAv. words, to the underlying ideas, we see glimpses of the original ideas ~ that a harmful, hurtful, pain-causing way of being (YAv. *aṅra-mainyu-*),⁷³ makes an unenlightened (dark) existence, an existence that is cruel, untruthful, unhappy, a 'bad' existence in the sense that it is the opposite of intrinsic goodness ~ all of which reflect ideas that we see in the Gathas. But by the time of this Pahlavi/Pazand text (and the unknown YAv. source of the quotation), the imagery may have been taken literally ~ the meanings behind the imagery may no longer have been understood.

Pahlavi reference to a YAv. Nask which has not survived.

The Pahlavi text *Dinkard* 8, contains the following statement about a YAv. Nask which has not survived.

"In the *Rado-dad-aitih* many harsh things are said about the severe punishment of the unhelpful ones [West's ft. 2 "Otherwise read ... 'producers of irritation'..."] in the spiritual existence." E. W. West translation.⁷⁴

Even here, there is no explicit mention that the 'spiritual existence' is in an afterlife. We know (and the Gathas assert) that mortal existence (including this life) includes the existences of matter (physical) and mind/spirit. But even if we assume that the "spiritual existence" mentioned here is in an afterlife, we have no way of knowing whether the author of this passage in *Dinkard* 8 had himself read the *Rado-dad-aitih Nask*, or was just transmitting what he had heard about it, after it no longer existed (double hearsay). But if this author's information about the contents of the *Rado-dad-aitih Nask* was accurate, we still have to question whether that Nask was indeed written during YAv. times or whether (like the *Vendidad*) it originated long after YAv. times. The only surviving Avestan Nask identified in the *Dinkard* is the *Vendidad* which is full of grammatical errors and therefore cannot have been written until long after Avestan times. So the question arises, was the *Rado-dad-aitih Nask* also grammatically flawed (like the *Vendidad*) indicating it was written after Avestan times? We have no way of knowing.

But even if we assume that the *Rado-dad-aitih Nask* was written during YAv. times, it would necessarily have been a very late text because none of the major YAv. texts (itemized above) say anything ~ let alone "many harsh things" ~ about "severe punishments ... in the spiritual existence" for those who were "unhelpful" (or "irritating") to the religious establishment.

Conclusion.

In the Zoroastrianism of Younger Avestan times the evolution of *all* existence to an all-good end (YAv. *frašō.kərəiti-*),⁷⁵ was assured and certain as it is in the Gathas. There is no notion of any punishment in an afterlife (let alone in a place of tortures), nor any notion of adverse consequences in an after life, in any Avestan text that was composed during Avestan times (when the priestly establishment was fluent in the Avestan language).

There is scant evidence of adverse consequences (but no description of tortures in a place of punishment) in an afterlife, only in YAv. texts that were written long after YAv. times ~ one Fragment, and the *Vendidad*.

The evidence discussed in this chapter details *all* instances in *all* surviving Avestan texts (in SBE) (even though written after Avestan times), and *all* Av. sources mentioned in the *Aogemadaeca* and *Dinkard*, which deal with punishment in the afterlife.⁷⁶

When we consider that the surviving Avestan texts comprise three volumes in SBE (totalling more than 1,000 pages), we begin to appreciate how inaccurate it is to conclude that the dual paradigms of heaven/hell, reward/punishment, salvation/damnation, was a part of Zoroastrian religious beliefs in the Gathas, or even during YAv. times, as so many scholars ~ Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians ~ have done.

And to say that this dual paradigm of heaven/hell was invented by Zarathushtra is even worse.

Why does it upset me so much? Because it is not only false and not supported by any evidence ~ other than (well-intentioned) interpretations personal to a given translator ~ but it also totally distorts and destroys Zarathushtra's profound and beautiful envisionment (which is both logical and mystical) that existence starts out as a mixed way of being (evil and more beneficial), that the defeat of evil will be accomplished by changing minds through experience, and that eventually, through a (long) process of spiritual growth, a true (wholly good) existence is a certain end for all that exists.⁷⁷ No control through fear in this envisionment. Indeed, the freedom to choose (and make mistakes, and learn from them) is an essential part of this envisionment.

The notion of a place of cruel tortures as punishment in an afterlife first appears in Pahlavi texts. Whether this notion was prevalent during Sasanian times (more than 700 years after the latest date for Zarathushtra), or arose after the Arab invasion of Iran (more than 1,100 years after the latest date for Zarathushtra) we do not know, because all surviving Pahlavi texts were written after the fall of the Sasanian empire.⁷⁸

During YAv. times (before the *Vendidad*) the material gifts, and rituals mentioned in the *Yasnas* and *Yashts*, would have made the religious establishment of that time wealthy and powerful. So there was no need to scare people into obedience by the threat of tortures as punishments in the afterlife. This, I think, accounts in large part for the total absence of punishments in the afterlife in YAv. texts during Avestan times.

Another reason for this absence was of course the fact that the Avestan mind-set was focused on *this* life, as described in the beginning of this chapter. The mind-set of the Achaemenians (based on

what little information we have) was also focused on *this* life. And (within human limitations) their style of ruling ~ especially in the earlier reigns ~ was close to Zarathushtra's notion of 'good rule'.

I doubt that the Achaemenian kings would have allowed the kinds of priestly punishments detailed in the *Vendidad*. Being politic and wise rulers, they would not have permitted such a drain on the financial resources of their subjects, nor financial servitude in favor of priestly power and aggrandizement, especially in light of the fact that Achaemenian rulers did not require such financial servitude for themselves, and in addition their non-Zoroastrian subjects in that large multi-cultural empire, would have been under no such compulsion.

How the Avestan (and Achaemenian) mind-set changed during the Seleucid and Parthian periods that followed the fall of the Achaemenians, we do not know much about.

In the *Vendidad*, (written long after Avestan times, and almost certainly after the fall of the Achaemenian empire) many of the infractions were so petty, and invaded so many of the very small details of everyday life, that it would have been nearly impossible for a human being ~ especially in a rural, farming society ~ to not commit multiple infractions. The 30 plus 20 strokes (of the whip) in the YAv. *Mihir Yasht*, (which in any event were part of an initiation purification ritual),⁷⁹ had escalated to a punitive maximum ~ unrelated to initiation rituals ~ of 20,000 lashes in the *Vendidad*, which no human being could possibly survive. But we know that these whippings could be converted at the priests' discretion into cash fines.⁸⁰ Thus, the higher the number of lashes, the more income for the religious establishment, which accounts for their staggering numbers. And if a person could not pay such cash fines at one time, he would have been encumbered with the burden of paying off such a cash debt (or multiple such debts for multiple infractions) over many years. The expensive and elaborate rituals ~ especially the cleansing rituals ~ that were mandated for an unrealistic multitude of actions (or failures to act), none of which were intrinsically 'wrong' ~ also were an income generating vehicle for the priests. The additional many, many gifts required for atonement, would have been impossible for the average man to pay at one shot, and would have required payments in goods and services over many years, even a lifetime ~ all resulting in a free source of labor and services for the religious establishment, and correspondingly many years, if not a lifetime, of unpaid servitude for the average person ~ all such atonements and punishments being in this life.

So punishments in the afterlife were not needed to generate wealth for (or ensure obedience to) the religious establishment, which had not yet lost the power to inflict all such punishments in *this* life,⁸¹ as it had after the Arab invasion.

When the wealth-generating rituals, punishments and atonements of the *Vendidad* (in this life) had escalated far beyond anything in earlier YAv. texts ~ almost to the point of being self-defeating ~ an additional method of control would have been needed to maintain the wealth and power of the religious establishment. And that additional method of control was fear ~ fear of the unknown, fear of the afterlife, fear of punishment and suffering in the afterlife, which accounts for the beginnings of threats extending to an afterlife.

To summarize: The evidence (and lack of evidence) in this chapter establishes that the idea of damnation and punishment in a hell of tortures in the afterlife, is absent from all surviving YAv. texts (written during YAv. times), and was not a tenet of Zoroastrian belief during Avestan times (even though YAv. texts differ from the Gathas in many other respects).

Even in the 2 surviving texts written in faulty Avestan, and therefore long after Avestan times ~ *Fragment 22* and the *Vendidad* ~ punishment in an afterlife is not a place of torture, just cold, stink, and bad food (... well ... I admit ... 'bad food' to those of us raised on the delights of Parsi and Irani cuisine might be deemed torture ...).

In short, there is no evidence at which supports the idea ~ expounded by so many scholars ~ that during Avestan times a 'hell' of tortures and punishment was any part of Zoroastrian religious belief ~ nor indeed that this idea was invented by Zarathushtra (of all calumnies, the most cruel and unjust!).

* * * * *

¹ Detailed in *Part Four: The Syncretization*.

² Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and the beautiful physical forms of such deities represented the kind of beauty that was admired in that culture ~ some of which would (and some would not) be admired in our own culture and times. For example,

Describing Ardvi Sura Anahita the spiritual essence of the waters,

"Then Ardvi Sura Anahita, O Spitama Zarathushtra! proceeded forth from the Maker Mazda. Beautiful were her white arms, thick as a horses' shoulder or still thicker ..." Yt. 5.7, SBE 23, p. 55;

"Ardvi Sura Anahita ... in the shape of a maid, fair of body, most strong, tall-formed, high-girded, ... wearing shoes up to the ankle, with all sorts of ornaments and radiant..." Yt. 5.78, SBE 23, p. 72.

"... [she] drives forwards on her chariot, holding the reins, ..." Yt. 5.11, SBE 23, p. 56;

"...she wears square golden earrings on her ears ... and a golden necklace around her beautiful neck ... she girded her waist tightly, so that her breasts may be well-shaped ..." Yt. 5.127; SBE 23, p. 83.

Describing a legendary hero

"... Keresaspa, ... a youth of great ascendant, ringlet-headed, bludgeon-bearing..." Yy9.10; Mills translation, SBE 31, pp. 233 - 234.

So much for those (misinformed) teachers of the religion today, who claim that Avestan was never a secular language and was created solely for ritual chants, and to spiritually purify the world.

³ Here are a few examples of the human-like natures of the syncretized deities of the YAv. texts who could be kind and cruel, helpful and harmful, et cetera. All in Darmesteter's translation in SBE.

Vayu, the spiritual essence of the wind.

Kind. (Vayu purportedly speaking) "My name is He that prevails over malice; my name is He that destroys malice. My name is He that unites; my name is He that separates. ..." *Ram Yasht*, Yt. 15.47; SBE 23, p. 260;

Cruel. (Vayu purportedly speaking) "... My name is He that hurls away. ... My name is He that destroys ... My name is He that crushes at one stroke ... " *Ram Yasht*, (devoted to Vayu 'wind') Yt. 15.45, SBE 23 pp. 259 - 260 (hurricanes, perhaps?);

"My name is the All-smiting, because I can smite the creatures of both worlds, the one that the Good Spirit has made and the one that the Evil Spirit has made..." *Ram Yasht*, Yt. 15.44, SBE 23, p. 259;

Mithra, the spiritual essence of the contract.

Helpful. "Helping and guarding, guarding behind and guarding in front, Mithra ... proves an undeceivable spy and watcher for the man to whom he comes to help ..." *Mihir Yasht*, Yt. 10.46, SBE 23, p. 131;

Protecting. "Not the wound of the well-sharpened spear or of the flying arrow reaches that man to whom Mithra comes for help ..." *Mihir Yasht*, Yt. 10.24, SBE 23, p. 125;

Harmful, cruel. "... then comes Mithra, angry and offended, and he breaks asunder the house, the borough, the town, the province..." *Mihir Yasht*, Yt. 10.18, SBE 23, p. 124.

(Mithra purportedly speaking) "To whom shall I, in my might, impart sickness and death? To whom shall I impart poverty and sterility? Of whom shall I at one stroke cut off the offspring? From whom shall I take away ... the awful sovereignty, beautifully arrayed, with many armies ... ?" Yt. 10.110 - 111, SBE 23, p. 148;

Verethraghna the spiritual essence of the victory of good over evil.

Good. "... he bore the good Glory, made by Mazda ... that is both health and strength." *Bahram Yasht* (Av. Verethraghna), Yt. 14.2, SBE 23, p. 232;

Harmful, cruel. (Verethraghna purportedly speaking) "... To whom shall I, in my might, impart illness and death?" *Bahram Yasht* Yt. 14.47, SBE 23, p. 244.

⁴ See the first few chapters in *Part One* which discuss the attributes of the Divine (amesha spenta) each of which in the Gathas is used as a concept, as a characteristic of the Divine, as a characteristic of man (or that man is capable of attaining), and (the fewest times) as an allegorical figure.

⁵ "...I beseech you ... for an offspring self-dependent whom multitudes will bless, ..."Yy65.11 (a YAv. Yasna addressing the waters and its spiritual essence Ardivi Sura Anahita).

⁶ For Ahura Mazda as the source for Yima's rule, see the rather lovely story of Yima quoted from the YAv. *Vendidad* in a ft. in *Part One: The Freedom To Choose*.

⁷ SBE 23, pp. 59 - 60.

⁸ *rāman-* in Av. means 'peace'; *rāmā* is its nom./acc. sg. declension in GAv. (Skjaervo 2006). In Av. texts, this word and name does not stand for the famous and good deity of India, Rama (although it is possible that his name meant 'peace' or 'peaceful one').

⁹ In the *Mihir Yasht*, a few times, the punishments are for failing to worship, but more often for lying (telling lies) to Mithra. If we recall that Mithra was the spiritual essence of the contract, then we begin to understand the YAv. mind-set that telling lies to Mithra is telling lies to the contract - breaking one's word to each person or family or tribe with whom the contract was made. In an age when contracts between families, or tribes, could mean the difference between survival or annihilation from hostile forces, we can understand how important keeping one's contracts must have been.

This conclusion is corroborated in the *Mihir Yasht*, ("The ruffian who lies unto Mithra brings death unto the whole country, injuring as much of the faithful world [*ašava.jaciŋ*] as a hundred evil-doers could do. ..." Yt. 10.2, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 120).

Yet however much Mithra might act in kind and cruel ways, in his Yasht we see an integrity that is rather lovely, expressed in rest of § 2 which I give you in Gershevitch's translation (so you can feel assured that I have not molded the evidence to suit my ideas).

"Never break a contract, O Spitamid, whether you conclude it with an owner of Falsehood, or a Truth-owning follower of the good Religion; for the contract applies to both, the owner of Falsehood and him who owns Truth." *Avestan Hymn To Mithra*, p. 75.

¹⁰ The YAv. texts contain many descriptions of 'good' rewards ~ most of which are material rewards in mortal existence (examples given below) and some of which are more spiritual (or abstract) rewards which exist in both mortal existence, and in a non-mortal existence (thus necessarily in an afterlife).

Here are a few examples of the 'good' rewards, in YAv. texts for which worshippers prayed, to various deities, or which such deities were said to grant. I have attempted to select a few examples (there are many more) from a wide cross section of YAv. texts, to give you an overview of the nature of these good rewards ~ almost all material things in mortal existence.

Good rewards prayed for.

To fire: "[grant] ...an offspring sure of foot, that never sleeps on watch ... and that rises quick from bed, ... helpful ... legitimate, keeping order in men's meetings ... drawing men to assemblies through their influence and word, grown to power, skillful, redeeming others from oppression, ...". Yy62.5 Mills translation, SBE 31, pp. 314 - 315;

To Ardvi Sura Anahita: "...that I, fully blessed, may conquer large kingdoms, ... with high tributes, with snorting horses, sounding chariots, flashing swords, ... with stores of food, with well-scented beds; that I may have at my wish the fullness of the good things of life and whatever makes a kingdom thrive. *Aban Yasht*, Yt. 5.130, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, pp. 83 - 84;

To Mithra: "Whom the horsemen worship on the back of their horses, begging swiftness for their teams, health for their own bodies, and that they may watch with full success, those who hate them, smite down their foes, and destroy at one stroke their adversaries, their enemies, and those who hate them." *Mihir Yasht*, Yt. 10.11, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 122; A similar request in Yt. 10.114, SBE 23, p. 149;

Din Yasht. "Let everything be as friendly to us as anything can be: may we go smoothly along the roads, find good pathways in the mountains, run easily through the forests, and cross happily the rivers!" *Din Yasht*, Yt. 16.3, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 265;

Request for help with specific tasks.

"...Do thou ... leave me a dry passage to pass over the good Vitanghuhaiti [a river]. [the deity's response] ... A part of the waters she made stand still, a part of the waters she made flow forward and she left him a dry passage to pass over the good Vitanghuhaiti." *Aban Yasht*, Yt. 5.77 - 78, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 72 (a precursor of the parting of the Red Sea in the Bible?)

[requested help] "... that I may answer the ninety-nine hard riddles that he asks me maliciously, the evil-doing Akhtya..." *Aban Yasht*, Yt. 5.82, Darmesteter translation SBE 23, p. 73.

Good rewards granted by such deities

"May a herd of kine be with thee, and a multitude of men, may an active mind go with thee, and an active soul as well. As a blest soul may'st thou live through thy life, the nights which thou shalt live. This is the blessing of the Fire for him who brings it wood ..." Yy62.10 Mills translation, SBE 31, p. 316;

[Question] "... what reward shall there be for that man who shall recite the Rapithwina office with the Rapithwina prayer for blessing, and who shall sacrifice with ... [various rituals described] ...?"

[Answer] "As the wind from the southern quarter, ... causes the entire material world to advance and to increase, and as it will bless it, and rejoice it, and cause it to progress, such a like reward does such a man receive who recites the Rapithwina-ratu, with the Rapithwina blessing, and sacrifices [the same rituals are described here as in the question]...", *Afringan i Rapithwin* §§ 4 - 7; Mills translation, SBE 31, pp. 374 - 375;

Some of the rewards given by Tishtrya, spiritual essence of the star, in the *Tir Yasht*, (Darmesteter translation)

~ "[makes the waters] ... flow down unrestrained to the big-seeded cornfields, to the small-seeded pasture-fields and to the whole of the material world." Yt. 8.29, SBE 23, p. 101;

~ "then the wind blows the clouds forward, bearing the waters of fertility, so that the friendly showers spread wide over, they spread helpfully and friendly over the seven Karshvares." Yt. 8.40, SBE 23, p. 104;

~ "the bright and glorious star who washes away all things of fear ... and brings health to all these creations, being most beneficent when he has been worshipped with a sacrifice ..." Yt. 8.43; SBE 23, p. 105;

~ "If the Aryan countries, ... would perform in honour of the bright and glorious Tishtrya, the due sacrifice and invocation ... never should a hostile horde enter these Aryan countries, nor any plague, nor leprosy, nor venomous plants, nor the chariot of a foe, nor the uplifted spear of a foe." Yt. 8.56, SBE 23, p. 108; Almost identical rewards described in the *Bahram Yasht*, Yt. 14.48, SBE 23, p. 244;

Some of the rewards given by Mithra, Darmesteter translation,

~ "... who, when not deceived, establisheth nations in supreme strength; who, when not deceived, establisheth nations in supreme victory;" Yt. 10.26; SBE 23, p. 126;

~ "Who upholds the columns of the lofty house and makes its pillars solid; who gives herds of oxen and male children to that house in which he has been satisfied; he breaks to pieces those in which he has been offended." Yt. 10.28, SBE 23, p. 126;

~ "Thou makest houses large, beautiful with women, beautiful with chariots, with well-laid foundations, and high above their groundword; ... in which the master ... holding libations in his hand, offers thee a sacrifice, in which thou art invoked by thy own name and with the proper words." Yt. 10.30, SBE 23, p. 127 (equating beautiful women with beautiful chariots? ... not in keeping with the gender equality often found in YAv. texts);

~ "... increase-giving, fatness-giving, cattle-giving, sovereignty-giving, son-giving, cheerfulness-giving, and bliss-giving." Yt. 10.65, SBE 23, p. 135 (nothing about 'daughter-giving');

"We sacrifice to the powerful Drvaspa ...who keeps the flocks in health, the herds in health, the grown-up (cattle) in health, the young ones in health; who watches well from afar, with a wide-spread and long-continued welfare-giving friendship;" *Gosh Yasht*, Yt. 9.1, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 111. Drvaspa's name means 'she who keeps the horses in health' Darmesteter, Introduction SBE 23, p. 110.

The rewards of spiritual essences (deities) of concepts from the Gathas,

The YAv. texts created spiritual essences out of certain Gatha concepts.

daēnā- and *cisti-*

daēnā- 'envisionment' in the Gathas became the title of the later *Din Yasht* which is devoted to Chisti; *cisti-* in the Gathas is a concept, which means 'illumination, understanding' (Skjaervo 2006); but Chisti

in the *Din Yasht* gives not only good rewards that are abstract and relate to 'understanding, illumination', but also material rewards that have nothing to do with 'understanding, illumination' ~ all in this life. Here are some of these rewards, Darmesteter translation.

"... Rise up from thy seat, ... thou most right [*razište* 'most straight, most honest'] Chista, ... If thou art before me, stay for me; if thou art behind me, overtake me." *Din Yasht*, Yt. 16.2, SBE 23, p. 265; Avestan word from Geldner 2P p. 228;

[Referring to Chisti] "To whom Zarathushtra did sacrifice for righteousness of thought, for righteousness of speech, for righteousness of deed, and for this boon,

"That the most right Chista, ... would give him the swiftness of the feet, the quick hearing of the ears, the strength of the arms, the health of the whole body, the sturdiness of the whole body, and the eye-sight of the male horse, that, in the dark of the night, through the rain, the snow, the hail, or the sleet, from as far as nine districts, can perceive a horse's hair, mingled with the earth, and knows whether it is from the head or from the tail." *Din Yasht*, Yt. 16.9 - 10; almost identical words in §§ 6 - 7 (except for "... eye-sight of the Kara fish...") and §§ 12 - 13 (except for "...eye-sight of the vulture ...") Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, pp. 266 - 267;

"To whom the Athravans [fire priests], sent afar, did sacrifice, wishing a good memory to preach the law [*daēnayāi* 'for envisionment' in the Gathas] and wishing strength for their own body." *Din Yasht*, Yt. 16.17, SBE 23, p. 268; Avestan word from Geldner 2P p. 230.

aši- vaṇuhi

The *Ashi Yasht*, celebrates the spiritual essence of *aši- vaṇuhi* 'good reward'; in the Gathas, the 'good reward' is the true (good) order of existence and its component parts; but in the *Ashi Yasht*, the good rewards are all material, reflecting perhaps the desires of the king and warriors whom the author served as priest?

~ "Those men whom thou dost attend, O Ashi! are kings of kingdoms, that are rich in horses, with large tributes, with snorting horses, sounding chariots, flashing swords, rich in ... stores of food; well-scented where the beds are spread, and full of all the other riches that may be wished for..." Yt. 17.7, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 272;

~ "... have beds that stand well-spread, well-adorned, well-made, provided with cushions and with feet inlaid with gold..." Yt. 17.9, SBE 23, p. 272;

~ "... have their ladies that sit on their beds, waiting for them ... with square-bored ear-rings and a necklace of gold..." Yt. 17.10, SBE 23, p. 272;

~ "... have daughters that sit ... thin is their waist, beautiful is their body, long are their fingers; they are as fair of shape as those who look on can wish..." Yt. 17.10, SBE 23, p. 273;

~ "... have horses swift and loud-neighing; they drive the chariot lightly, they take it to the battle, they bear a gallant praiser ... who has many horses, a solid chariot, a sharp spear, a long spear, and swift arrows, who hits his aim, pursuing after his enemies, and smiting his foes..." Yt. 17.12, SBE 23, p. 273;

~ "... have large-humped, burden-bearing camels, flying from the ground or fighting with holy fieriness..." Yt. 17.13, SBE 23, p. 273;

~ "... have hordes of silver and gold brought together from far distant regions; and garments of splendid make..." Yt. 17.14; SBE 23, p. 273.

¹¹ Here, from a cross section of YAv. texts, are a few examples of the many, many, punishments (purportedly) inflicted by various deities (spiritual essences of material things) for failure to worship, or failure to obey religious mandates, (or telling lies to Mithra). As you can see, they all occur in the material existence. The punishments in the *Vendidad* inflicted by priests, not by 'deities', are not included here ~ the *Vendidad* was written long after Avestan times in any event.

YAv. *Yasnas*.

(Punishments for failing to worship Haoma or appropriating his offerings ~ Haoma supposedly speaking)
"... Childless be thou, shorn of offspring, evil-famed, and slander-followed, who holdest me from full outpouring, as a robber, skulls in-crushing..." p. 245

"Who this offering would deny me, eats himself, or prays it from me ... In his house is born no fire-priest, warrior ne'er in chariot standing, never more the thrifty tiller. In his home be born Dahakas, Murakas of evil practice, doing deeds of double nature. ... Heed lest H(a)oma bind thee fettered, as he bound the fell Turanian Frangrasyan [ft. 1 "A Turanian king."] ... fast in iron close-surrounded in the mid-third of this earth!" Yy10.3, 5, 6, 7, Mills translation SBE 31 pp. 245 - 246 (indicating that the occupations of priest, warrior and tiller were not hereditary ~ we see the same thing in the YAv. *Vishtasp Yasht*, discussed in *Part Four: No Castes*).

(Request to Haoma about a wicked woman who beguiles the Fire-priest), "... never make her, nor give her holy sons!" Yy10.15 Mills translation SBE 31, p. 243.

Tir Yasht, celebrating the star Tishtrya and its spiritual essence,

(If an evil person takes Tishtrya's offerings) "Plagues will ever pour upon the Aryan nations, hostile hordes will ever fall upon the Aryan nations; the Aryans will be smitten by their fifties, and their hundreds, by their hundreds and their thousands, by their thousands and their tens of thousands, by their tens of thousands and their myriads of myriads." *Tir Yasht*, Yt. 8.61, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 109.

Bahram Yasht, identical language to *Tir Yasht*, (Yt. 8.61 quoted above); Yt. 14.53, Darmesteter translation SBE 23, p. 245.

Mihir Yasht, about Mithra, spiritual essence of the contract,

(those who lie to Mithra) "Their falcon-feathered arrows, shot from the string of the well-bent bow, fly towards the mark, and hit it not, as Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, angry, offended, and unsatisfied, comes and meets them. Their spears, well whetted and sharp, their long spears fly from their hands towards the mark and hit it not as Mithra ... angry, offended, and unsatisfied, comes and meets them." Yt. 10.39, SBE 23, p. 129; (Yt.10.40 the same with their swords and clubs SBE 23, p. 129) Darmesteter translation;

(referring to Mithra) "Who ... smites the foe in battle, ... till he has smitten away the marrow and the column of life, the marrow and the spring of existence. He cuts all the limbs to pieces, and mingles together with the earth, the bones, hair, brains, and blood of the men who have lied to Mithra." Yt. 10.71 - 72; SBE 23, p. 137;

(the ones who offend Mithra) "And then Mithra, ... throws them to the ground, killing their fifties and their hundreds, their hundreds and their thousands, their thousands and their tens of thousands, their tens of thousands and their myriads of myriads; as Mithra, ... is angry and offended." Yt. 10.43, SBE 23, p. 130;

Yt.10.98 "... May Mithra ... never smite us in his anger; ..." Yt. 10.98, SBE 23, p. 144.

¹² See in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution*, and *The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

¹³ Thus, in YAv. texts, we see a paradigm shift, (for example)

(1) From the *Aban Yasht* in which the pre-Zarathushtrian deity Ardvi Sura Anahita gives earthly rewards as an incentive for extravagant sacrifices and rituals, and (much less emphasized) earthly punishments for failing to do so,

(2) To the *Mithra Yasht* in which the pre-Zarathushtrian deity Mithra gives horrific punishments for failing to sacrifice, but adds an ethical dimension ~ the notion of punishment and death for telling lies (in addition to failing to make sacrifices and rituals),

(3) To an ethical shift reflected in YAv. texts which show the influence of Zarathushtra's ideas in the Gathas. For example, *səraoša-* in the Gathas is the concept of 'listening ~ hearing and implementing the Word of Wisdom'. In Yy57 (a YAv. Yasna in praise of Sraoša) and in the *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Sraoša is an allegorical figure (or perhaps by then the spiritual essence of the concept), celebrated and depicted as a mighty warrior who smites the 'fiends' of Anger, Wrath, Fury (*aēšəma-*), and the Lie (*druj-*), as well as evil-doing people, but who is friendly to, and protects, good people. If you look past the image of the allegory, the message of these last two YAv. texts dedicated to Sraoša is the Zarathushtrian notion that 'listening to the Word of Wisdom' (Sraoša) results in the destruction of anger, the lie and other 'fiends', the elimination of evil in people, and the protection of those who engage in good thoughts, words and actions.

"... who with his levelled battle-axe, smites Aēshema [anger]..." Yy57.9, a YAv. Yasna dedicated to Sraoša, Mills translation, SBE 31 p. 300;

"... who was the smiter of the Lie-Demon [*drujō*]..." Yy57.15, Mills translation, SBE 31 p. 301; Avestan word transliterated from Geldner 1P p. 199;

"... Who strikes the evil-doing man, who strikes the evil-doing woman; who smites the fiendish Druj [lie]..." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.10, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, pp. 162 - 163;

"... the houses protected by Sraoša, where the holy Sraoša is dear and friendly, treated and satisfied, as well as the faithful man, rich in good thoughts, rich in good words, rich in good deeds." *Srosh Yasht Hadhokht*, Yt. 11.20, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 166; Avestan word transliterated from Geldner 2P p. 161.

And here again, the 'harm' and 'help' described is all in mortal existence ~ although in an ethical context. Sraoša in the Gathas and in some YAv. texts is discussed in more detail in *Part Three: Seraoša*.

¹⁴ Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation*.

¹⁵ Detailed in *Part One: The Identity of the Divine*, and in *Part Two: A Question of Immanence*.

¹⁶ Detailed in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*, and *The Puzzle of Creation*.

¹⁷ Detailed in *Part One: A Question of Salvation*; and *Zarathushtra's Paradise in This World & the Next*, and in *Part Two: A Question of Reward & the Path*; and *The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

¹⁸ Detailed in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

¹⁹ See *Part One: Does the Devil Exist?*

²⁰ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha; and Good & Evil*.

²¹ See *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge of Discerning*.

²² Detailed in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution*.

²³ Zaehner asserts the same conclusion, (Zaehner 1961 p. 308 and footnoted references).

²⁴ The examples of 'most-bad existence' (*acišta- ahu-*) as the 'bad reward' are few and far between in YAv. texts in which most of the 'bad rewards' are material calamities (detailed in a ft. above). But here is one example. Yy71.15 says,

yeiḍizī zaraθuštra aēte vācō ustame urvāēse gayehe framravāi pairitē tanavō uzām yōi ahurō mazdā urvānām haca acištāṭ aṇhaoṭ avavaiṭya bāzasca fraθasca pairi.tanvyā yaθa īm zā•• astica īm zā•• avaiti bāzō yavaiti fraθasciṭ•• Yy71.15, Geldner 1P p. 235.

My translation.

'For if, O Zarathushtra, you proclaim ... this Word, 'at (this) turning point of (your) life' [*urvāēse gayehe*] I Ahura Mazda, (will keep your) soul/self [*urvānām*] away from (a) most-bad existence [*acištāṭ aṇhaoṭ*] as far away as the thickness and width of the earth ...' Yy71.15;

Mills translation.

"For if, O Zarathushtra! thou shalt pronounce these words at the last ending of (thy) life I, Ahura Mazda, will keep your soul away from Hell. Yea, so far away shall I hold it as is the breadth and extension of the earth [(Pazand) and the earth is as wide as it is long]." Yy71.15.

Mills reads into his translation of Yy71.15 his own belief system of "Hell" in the afterlife. He translates *haca acištāṭ aṇhaoṭ* as "away from Hell", instead of 'away from (a) most-bad existence'.

He translates *urvāēse gayehe* as "at the last ending of (thy) life", although there are no words "last ending" in the YAv. text. The following linguistic analysis demonstrates how interpretive his translation is.

acištāṭ aṇhaoṭ literally, 'from (a) most-bad existence'.

acištāṭ is abl. sg. ('from __') of the stem *acišta-* 'most-bad' ~ the superlative degree of *aka-* 'bad';

aṇhaoṭ is abl. sg. of the stem *ahu-* 'existence, life'.

(Jackson 1892 shows these abl. sg. inflections for *-a-* and *-u-* stem words, respectively, §§ 236, 262, pp. 70, 76).

There are no articles ('the, a') in Av. And you can see how the meaning changes when we insert 'the' or 'a'; without 'the', 'most-bad existence' is a general condition, a general state of being. The mention here of keeping the soul away from most-bad existence as far away as the earth's dimensions is consistent with the idea that most-bad existence is here on earth ~ in mortal existence.

urvānām 'soul/self' is acc. sg. and therefore requires an implied verb '(will keep your) soul ...'.

urvāēse gayehe literally means 'at turning point of life';

gayehe in YAv. means 'of life', it is gen. sg. of the stem *gaya-* 'life' (Skjaervo 2003).

urvāēse in YAv. means 'at turning point', it is loc. sg. of the stem *urvāēsa-*, a racing term (Humbach 1991 Vol. 2 p. 137), indicating a turning point in a race course.

Here I think *urvāēse gayehe* 'at (this) turning point of (your) life' is used to describe the turning point in Zarathushtra's life (starting a new lap) when he understood and started to teach ("proclaim") Wisdom's "Word" (mentioned in Yy71.15 above), which advocates the path of truth, the path of the 'most-good existence' ~ a

path which would necessarily keep him 'away from the most-bad existence [*acištāt aṅhaoṅ*]...' in Yy71.15 (above). My interpretation is supported by two Gatha verses which express somewhat parallel thoughts.

(1) "(But) at this very turning point [*urvaēsē*] in which I exist, Thou, the Wise One, hast come into the world with Thy [*spānta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] (and) with the rule of good thinking, through the actions of which the creatures allied with truth do prosper..." Y43.6, Insler 1975.

(2) And in the Gathas, proclaiming (or speaking out about) Wisdom's Word (as Yy71.15 states) leads to what is "better than good", ~ the most good existence ~ the opposite of the most-bad existence [*acištāt aṅhaoṅ* mentioned in Yy71.15]. "And may that man reach what is better than good, namely the one who would instruct us to the straight paths of the Mighty One ~ to those of this material existence and (to those) of the mind..." Y43.3, Insler 1975.

²⁵ See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

²⁶ In Yy1.21 and 22, there is no mention of a place of punishment for wrongdoing, ~ just a desire to make amends for the deficiency. Addressing 'deities' (for want of a better word) ~ pre-Zarathushtrian and post- (but here not Ahura Mazda),

Yy1.21 "If I have offended thee, whether by thought, or word or deed, whether by act of will or without intent or wish, I earnestly make up the deficiency of this in praise to thee. ..." Mills translation.

Yy1.22 "... all ye lords, ... if I have offended you by thought, word, or deed, whether with my will, or without intending error, I praise you (now the more) for this. ..." Mills translation.

SBE 31, p. 202.

²⁷ In his translation of the *Yashts*, Darmesteter more than once inserts an implied 'hell' into passages in which no equivalent Avestan word exists, or he interprets an Avestan word to mean 'hell' ~ neither of which is supported by the context of the passage, nor by more recent linguists.

In the *Farvardin Yasht*, Yt. 13.134, Darmester has chosen to add the words "[of hell]" into his translation. Giving him credit, he inserts the word in square brackets ~ indicating that it is not in the Av. text. But the implied addition is not supported either by the context or by the linguistics. The preceding section celebrates the *fravashi* of King Husravah, and this section mentions all the good things with which he is blessed. Here is Darmesteter's translation. The words in square brackets are his insertions (not mine).

"And for the vigour of health, for the Glory made by Mazda, for the health of the body, and for good and virtuous offspring, wise, chief in assemblies, bright, and clear-eyed, that frees [their father] from the pangs [of hell], of good intellect; and for that part of the blessed world that falls to wisdom and to those who do not follow impiety;" Yt. 13.134, SBE p. 223.

His interpretative addition of "Hell" is not supported by the context in that an offspring obviously cannot free his father from hell. The Av. words of this section (Yt. 13.134) are identical to the Av. words of § 75 of the *Zamyad Yasht*, (Yt.19.75). The Av. word which Darmesteter translates as "frees [their father] from the pangs [of hell]", is *qzō.būjō* which also appears in the *Zamyad Yasht*, where Hintze 1994 (in the *Zamyad Yasht*, Yt. 19.75) translates *qzō.būjō* as "rescuing from trouble". An offspring could indeed rescue his father from trouble, in a time period when nations often were at war.

So it is clear that there is no mention of "hell" in the *Farvardin Yasht*, Yt.13.134, or in the *Zamyad Yasht*, Yt. 19.75 (in which Darmesteter adds the same implied words). And he adds the same implied words (also in a

context pertaining to offspring) in the *Atash Nyایش* § 11, (SBE 23, p. 360). So repeatedly we see that Darmesteter's translation reads into the Av. texts, his own belief-system.

In § 44 of the *Zamyad Yasht*, Hintze 1994 (p. 24) shows a YAv. word *daožayvha* which she translates as 'hell'. Darmesteter also has the word "Hell" in § 44 (SBE 23 p. 296). Hintze's English translation does not give her footnotes, and in her English glossary, she simply shows 'hell' as the meaning of *daožayvha* without any comments on its origins or meaning. Skjaervo 2003 in his YAv. Glossary, also translates the YAv. *daožayvha* as 'hell', without comment. But Geldner shows the word (in § 44) as *dužayhu* without any mss. variations (Geldner 2P p. 249). The suffix *duž-* means 'bad, evil', and the word *ayhu-* means 'existence' (Skjaervo 2003). So in §44, if *daožayvha* is not an emendation (by Hintze and Skjaervo), it may have been a manuscript variation in a ms. not available to Geldner. In § 44 in Geldner, the phrase in which the word appears is *əṛəyata haca dužayhu*. Hintze's Glossary translates the stem *əṛəyant-* as 'tumultuous' (p. 43); Skjaervo 2003 as "frightening". My translation preference is 'chaotic'. So *əṛəyata haca dužayhu* 'from a chaotic evil existence'. Here is the evidence. The speaker is not specifically identified, but in this context is either a young monster or the Avestan equivalent of a juvenile delinquent, who killed a bunch of 'good guys' and boasts as follows. I give you both the Darmesteter and the Hintze translations for comparative purposes. Avestan words in square brackets are from Geldner 2P p. 249. English words in square brackets are my translations of the applicable Avestan phrase in red font.

Darmesteter:

§ 43 "... I am an infant still, I am not yet of age: if I ever grow of age, I shall make the earth a wheel, I shall make the heavens a chariot;

§ 44 I shall bring down the Good Spirit [*spəntəm mainyūm*] from the shining Garo-nmana [*YAv.garō.nmāna* 'house of song']; I shall make the Evil Spirit [*ayrəm mainyūm*] rush up from the dreary Hell [*əṛəyata haca dužayhu* 'from (his) chaotic evil existence']. They will carry my chariot, both the Good Spirit and the Evil One, unless the manly-hearted [*nairē.manā*] Keresaspa kill me.'

The manly-hearted Keresaspa killed him, his life went away, his spirit vanished." SBE 23, pp. 296 - 297.

Hintze 1994:

§ 43 "...I am a minor, not yet of full age I will make the earth into my wheel, I will make the sky into my chariot!

§ 44 I will fetch down the Bounteous Spirit [*spəntəm mainyūm*] from the radiant House of Welcome [*garō.nmāna* 'house of song'], I will raise up the Evil Spirit from the tumultuous Hell [*əṛəyata haca dužayhu* 'from (his) chaotic evil existence']. Both shall pull my chariot, the Bounteous and the Evil Spirit ~ provided that the manly-minded [*nairē.manā*] Keresaspa does not kill me.'

Manly-minded Keresaspa struck him down for the end of his life, for the destruction of his vitality." (p. 24.

In the context of § 44 of the *Zamyad Yasht*, this *dužayhu* (or *daožayvha*) 'bad existence, bad life' could be interpreted either as a bad place or as a bad state of being ~ the kind of life the Evil Spirit was leading ~ when the speaker made the Evil Spirit come to him. In either event, *dužayhu* (or *daožayvha*) is not described in this section as a place of punishment for 'bad' people.

In the *Vendidad*, Ch. 19, § 1, Darmesteter translates the Avestan word *davažā* as 'hell-born' in the following context.

"... The Druj came rushing along, the demon Buiti, the unseen death, the hell-born [*davažā*]." *Vendidad* Ch. 19, § 1; SBE 4, p. 204;

... *druxš hē pairi.dvarat būiti daēvō iθyejō maršaonəm davažā*•• *Vendidad* Ch. 19, § 1, Geldner 3P p. 123.

But even today there is uncertainty about the meaning of *davažā*. Skjaervo 2003 does not show *davažā*. He shows *dava-* which he defines as follows, " *dava-* < *dao-* (< *daw-* "deceive"?); mid[dle voice] to speak (used of evil beings)". Parenthetically, he shows the stems of other words appearing in this passage as follows, "*iθyejah-* dangerous"; and "*marša-* pass. of *mərəṅc-* to be destroyed". There is no Av. word in this passage which could be translated as 'hell'.

²⁸ Darmesteter's introduction to *Fragments 23 and 24*, states that *Fragment 24* is not only "very corrupt" but that many of its passages are incomplete quotations from the *Vendidad*, (which many linguists acknowledge is in badly flawed YAv. as detailed in another ft. herein).

²⁹ This Fragment is called Yasht 22 by Darmesteter, but he states that Yt. 21 and 22 are called by the Parsis the Hādōkht Nask, (which is not the same as the Hādōkht Nask given in the Pahlavi *Dinkard*, SBE 23 p. 311, and does not correspond with any part of it). Darmesteter acknowledges that Fragment Yt. 22 is not really a Yasht in the traditional sense, because it is not in praise of an "Ized" (i.e. one who is worshipped, Av. yazata), SBE 23, p. 1. This Fragment (Yt.) 22 purports to be YAv. text, and thus would have been composed many centuries after Zarathushtra.

³⁰ SBE Vol. 23, p. 341.

³¹ See *Part One: Reincarnation*.

³² Detailed in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

³³ In *Fragment 22*, what happens to a good soul and a "wicked" soul are mirror opposites in every way, except one. The good soul is met by an envisionment of his own goodness, in the shape of a beautiful maiden, who praises him for the good life he has lead. But in this YAv. text, there is no ugly hag who meets the bad soul, such as we see in certain Pazand and Pahlavi texts. I think the reason for this absence is that the original idea of the Chinvat bridge was a metaphor for a process of discerning whether the soul had attained the true (wholly good) order of existence completely, and therefore could make the transition from mortal existence to an existence not bound by mortality (see *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge of Discerning*). But by the time of the Pahlavi/Pazand texts, the good/bad dualism in mortal existence (in Av. texts), had grown to include a full-fledged dualism in the afterlife (heaven/hell).

³⁴ These different strands suggest a perception of 'heaven' and 'hell' as states of being (reflecting the thought of the Gathas), and as places (different from the Gathas). The different strands in YAv. texts pertaining to 'heaven' are discussed with details in *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*.

³⁵ This YAv. *Fragment Yt. 22* does not appear in Geldner's *Avesta*. However, my generous friend Farrokh Vajifdar was kind enough to check it out in Westergaard's edition of the Avestan texts, and he has informed me that there is no word 'hell' in the Avestan text, which simply states that the endless dark is reached in three steps ~ evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds. I have since then come across E. W. West's version (giving the Avestan and his translation). I do not know on which mss. West relied, but he says they do not contain the first three steps which he explains as follows "Omitted in the MSS, being the converse of [Ch.] II. 24 - 32." [i.e. Darmesteter's *Fragment Yt. 22.33*, which are the three steps to 'heaven' discussed later in this chapter]. Haug & West, *The Book of Arda Viraf*, Appendix II, Ch. III, pp. 297, and 315. The manuscripts themselves do not number paragraphs or sections. These numbers were inserted by modern scholars to

enable identification of each part of a text. West's numbering system does not correspond with the one used by Darmesteter (which is Westergaard's), which makes for some confusion in identifying parts of the text.

³⁶ It is worth noting that this same confusion occurs in the Pahlavi *Arda Viraf Namah*, in which these steps occur after death. It is probable that originally Evil-Thought, Evil-Word, Evil-Deed and Endless Darkness were all intended to reflect the nature of the "most-bad existence" which results from wrongful choices. But why the four steps? And why after death? This seems to indicate the author's lack of understanding of the original teachings, because in Zarathushtra's thought, the 'most-bad existence' (*ahu- acišta-*) is an on-going state of being resulting from wrongful choices which lead to 'darkness' (an unenlightened state of being) ~ all in mortal existence. See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

³⁷ SBE 23, p. 321. Although the four steps of bad thoughts, bad words, bad deeds and "darkness" as well as the bad food (in this Fragment 22 §§ 33 and 36) echo the metaphors of darkness and bad food in the Gathas (detailed in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*), these things do not appear to be used as metaphors in this YAv. Fragment. So it seems likely that this Fragment was attempting to conveying a tradition based on ideas derived from the Gathas (where 'hell' is a bad state of being) and also a later tradition in which 'hell' had become a bad place in the afterlife. Parenthetically, the Gathas do not require women to be obedient to their husbands. This is a later development in the history of the religion.

³⁸ The remaining §§ 37 - 42 are completely unrelated to what goes before, and the last scribe who re-copied *Fragment 22* may have added these sections from another source.

³⁹ Detailed in *Part Three: Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*.

⁴⁰ See *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*.

⁴¹ See *Part One: Does the 'Devil' Exist?* for the meaning of the name Angra Mainyu.

⁴² See for example, a footnote by E. W. West to the Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, in which he refers to statements in the Pahlavi *Vendidad*, regarding punishments in 'hell' in an afterlife. SBE 5, p. 125, ft. 1.

⁴³ See *Part Five: The Vendidad, An Overview*.

⁴⁴ Referring to the *Vendidad*, Zaehner 1961 speaks of "the appalling grammatical confusion that characterizes that ... work." (p. 162); Humbach/Faiss 2010 speak of "...the well-known fact that the grammatical endings found in the *Videvdad* are notoriously doubtful..." (p. 31). *Videvdad* is what many linguists call the *Vendidad*.

⁴⁵ Hintze (1994), Introduction to the *Zamyad Yasht*, p. 9.

⁴⁶ A comparison of the evolution of the name Ahura Mazda in YAv. texts and Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions (about 600 ? B.C.E. ~ 338 B.C.E.) in which that name had become one word 'Auramazdah' is evidence that the YAv. time period probably pre-dated the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions, see *Part Three: Evolution of the Name(s) Ahura Mazda*. The Achaemenian Empire fell in about 331 B.C.E.

⁴⁷ SBE Vol. 4, Darmesteter Intro. III, p. xl.

⁴⁸The examples of various 'offenses' (almost none of which are intrinsically 'wrong') for which various numbers of lashes (whippings) are prescribed are too numerous to detail here ~ especially as they are not relevant to the subject of this chapter, which concerns punishment in the afterlife. But here is just one example of other such punishments in *this* life. The *Vendidad* Ch. 9 §§ 47 to 49 address the punishment to be paid if a person "who does not know the rites of cleansing ... offers to cleanse the unclean..." (competition to the priestly establishment)

"... they shall bind his hands first; then they shall strip him of his clothes, they shall flay him alive, they shall cut off his head, and they shall give over his corpse unto the greediest of the birds ..." *Vendidad* Ch. 9, § 49, Darmesteter translation, SBE 4, p. 131.

Would you say that those religious authorities took job security seriously?

⁴⁹ Many of the rules of the *Vendidad* which prohibited defilement of natural elements or otherwise sought to regulate human behavior, originally may have been rules to promote physically clean living and thus help to reduce epidemics of illness which would have decimated populations. For example, the *Vendidad* prohibits any dead matter from being thrown into a water source ~ rivers, wells, lakes, etc. Today we know that dead bodies in rivers, lakes, (etc.) tend to bring on typhoid, cholera, and other such epidemics. When I first read the descriptions in the *Vendidad* which threatened invasions of various parts of the (material) body by the demon(s) of defilement if its rules were broken, I thought they were totally absurd ~ the kinds of things with which some people try to frighten children. But on reflection, these descriptions which are detailed and graphic, are similar to the symptoms of the kind of plague or black death which ravaged Europe during the Middle Ages, in which swellings occurred in armpits (presumably in the lymph nodes) and other parts of the body. At the time of the *Vendidad* diseases were thought to be the work of the Devil and his assistant demons, which may have been why the particular bodily symptoms are described as the appearance of demons of defilement in such parts of the body ~ the armpits are specifically mentioned.

⁵⁰ See *Part One: Does the Devil Exist?*

⁵¹ Here are some examples of instances in which Darmesteter inserts an implied 'hell' into passages, or interprets an Avestan word to mean 'hell' ~ neither of which is supported by the context of the passage, or by the Avestan language itself. All translations are by Darmesteter except where otherwise indicated.

1. *Vendidad* Ch. 3 § 35, SBE 4, p. 31; Geldner 3P p. 22.

In this first instance, we can see how far from the Gathas, and even the other YAv. texts, is the understanding and knowledge of the author of this passage, in that *spənta- ārmaiti-* ~ an attribute of the Divine in the Gathas, and one of the amesha spenta revered in other YAv. texts ~ has become merely the darkness (of the earth). I have paired Darmesteter's phrases with the Av. words in the order in which they appear in Geldner.

"... *spəntayā ārmatōiš təmō āca vaēšō āca acištəm āca ahūm ā vīspaca avi tiyra nimata*..."
Vendidad Ch. 3 § 35, Geldner 3P p. 22.

"He who tilling the earth, O Spitama Zarathushtra! would not kindly and piously give to one of the faithful, he shall fall down into the darkness [*təmō*] of Spenta Armaiti [*spəntayā ārmatōiš*], down into the world of woe [*āca vaēšō*], the dismal realm [*āca acištəm āca ahūm*], down into the house of hell."
Vendidad Ch. 3 § 35.

As you can see, there is no Av. word which corresponds to the English 'hell' here. We do have *āca acištəm āca ahūm* 'and to the most-bad existence'; but in the last phrase, which Darmesteter translates as "down into the house of hell" he does not account for *vīspaca* 'and all'; and according to Skjaervo 2003, 'house' in YAv.

is *nmāna-/dāmāna-*, neither of which words appear in this passage although Darmesteter's translation has 'house of hell'; Skjaervo says, *ā* ... *avi* mean 'to'; *tīyra* means 'pointed, sharp'; and Skjaervo does not show *nimata* at all;

2. *Vendidad* Ch. 4 §§ 2 - 10, SBE 4, pp. 34 - 37; Geldner 3P pp. 24 - 25.

In the following sections, the interpretation of "hell" is from later Pahlavi commentaries and Rivayats, and Darmesteter's choice of English words is influenced by such interpretations.

In the Indo-Iranian culture, contracts were of great value and importance, and to ensure that agreements were kept, the punishment for breaking a contract was severe. The *Vendidad* Ch. 4, §§ 2 - 6 records the types of contracts, and the consequences of breaking each, in the Avestan (or post-Avestan) culture.

§§ 2 - 4 (in the form of questions asked, and answers given by the author as though Ahura Mazda was speaking), records six types of contracts in ascending order of importance ~ first, the "word-contract"; second the "hand-contract"; third "the contract to the amount of a sheep"; fourth the "contract to the amount of an ox"; fifth, the "contract to the amount of a man"; sixth, the "contract to the amount of a field, ... in good land, ... fruitful, ... in good bearing." .

§§ 3 - 4 state that breach of one type of contract requires payment at the next higher level ~

§ 3 breach of the "word-contract ... shall be redeemed by the hand-contract; he shall give in pledge [ft. 8 "Or, 'as damages (?)'.] the amount of the hand-contract."

§ 4 breach of the "hand-contract shall be redeemed by the sheep-contract; he shall give ... the amount of the sheep-contract..."; breach of the "sheep-contract shall be redeemed by the ox-contract; he shall give ... the amount of the ox-contract; ..." and so forth.

§§ 5 - 6 then ask how many are held responsible for one man's breach of contract. The (inflected) Av. word for breach (of contract) is *aiwi.drux tō* which Darmesteter translates as "sin", but in YAv. *druj-* means 'lie' ~ *drux š* is its nom./voc. sg. form, and *aiwi.draox δa-* means "who may be deceived, cheated" Skjaervo 2003. And the answer given in §§ 5 - 6, is that the "...Nabanazdishtas [ft. 2 "The next of kin to the ninth degree."...] of the man breaching his contract shall be responsible to an extent that increases for each contract level "three hundredfold [*θriš.satāiš*]" for the word-contract; "six hundredfold" for the hand-contract; "seven hundredfold" for the sheep-contract; and so forth, up to a "thousandfold" for the field-contract, which Darmesteter interprets as "atonement" (for sin).

Presumably, the amount of the applicable payment by the next of kin from hundredfolds to a thousandfold, for a particular breach would be the cumulative (not individual) obligation of the next of kin to the ninth degree ~ I doubt that each kinsman's amount would be the full hundredfold or thousandfold amount. But even so, one man's breach of contract would fall heavily on his extended family. The objective clearly was to bring to bear on a person, the pressure of his extended family to keep him from breaching his contract. There is no notion of 'hell' ~ neither in the context nor in any YAv. word in these sections of the *Vendidad*.

However, (perhaps as the centuries went by, when because of invasions new laws were established, and when the old Avestan social laws were forgotten and the *Vendidad* was considered solely as a religious work), later Zoroastrians were puzzled by this passage in the *Vendidad*, and Darmesteter footnotes the explanations of commentaries as follows, "[Darmesteter quoting from a commentary] 'How long, how many years, has one to fear for the breach of a word-contract? ~ the Nabanazdishtas have to fear for three hundred years;' but it does not explain the nature of that fear; it only tries to reduce the circle of that liability to narrower limits; 'only the son born after the breach is liable for it; the righteous are not liable for it; when the father dies, the son, if righteous, has nothing to fear from it.' And finally the Ravaets [Rivayats] leave the kinsmen wholly aside; the penalty falling entirely upon the real offender, and the number denoting only the duration of his

punishment in hell: 'He who breaks a word-contract, his soul shall abide for three hundred years in hell' (Gr. Rav. 94)." Darmesteter SBE 4, p. 36, ft. 3.

3. *Vendidad* Ch. 4 §§ 11 - 16, SBE 4 pp. 37 - 39. Here again, it is the later commentaries that bring 'hell' into an interpretation of these sections.

§§ 11 - 16 of the *Vendidad* were clearly written by a different author (probably at a different time periods) than the above detailed §§ 2 - 10, because although the various types of contracts are the same, the penalties for breaking each type of contract are no longer payments at the next higher level, with next of kin involvement in increased amounts of damages from hundredfolds to a thousandfold.

By contrast, in §§ 11 - 16, the consequences of breaking each type of contract are whippings in correspondingly higher amounts ~ for a word-contract, "three hundred stripes with the Aspahe-ashtra, three hundred stripes with the Sraosho-charana" (i.e. two kinds of whips so 600 stripes in total); for a hand-contract, "six hundred stripes" with each of the two kinds of whips (1,200 total); and so forth up to a total of "one thousand stripes" with each of the two kind of whips (2,000 total) for breaking a field-contract. And Darmesteter footnotes the Rivayat commentary that the soul of the contract breaker would reside in hell for the corresponding hundreds of years.

We begin to understand the ridiculous amounts of whippings when we discover that such whippings could be converted by the priest into cash fines alluded to in the Pahlavi translation (of the *Vendidad*). Darmesteter states "it may readily be admitted that as early as the time of the last edition of the *Vendidad*, that conversion had already been made. " Darmesteter Introduction V, § 21, SBE 4, p. xcix. We have no way of knowing how late the "last edition of the *Vendidad*" may have been made. But we see a definite transition. In §§ 2 - 20 (above), it was the man who was damaged by the breach of contract, who benefitted from the punishment awarded for the breach. In §§ 11 - 16, it is the priests who benefitted (financially and in the power they wielded) from the punishment (whippings) awarded by the breach, which could be converted into cash fines.

⁵² See *Part Five: The Vendidad & Its Lessons For Today*.

⁵³ *nōiṭ bax šaiti vahištahe aṇhāuš*; Skjaervo 2003 shows the YAv. verb *bax ša-* in middle voice means 'to take on, to enjoy'; and of course *nōiṭ* is a word of negation 'not'; *vahištahe aṇhāuš* 'of most-good existence' ~ both words are gen. sg. (in YAv.) of their respective stems, thus literally *nōiṭ bax šaiti vahištahe aṇhāuš* 'shall not have enjoyment of most-good existence.'

⁵⁴ *Vendidad* Ch. 5 §§ 61 - 62, SBE 4 pp. 65 - 66; Geldner 3P pp. 41 - 42. The words in these two sections are repeated in Ch. 7 §§ 21 - 22, SBE 4 p. 79.

⁵⁵ The 'worst existence' is one of Zarathushtra's terms for the consequences of wrongful choices, discussed in more detail in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

⁵⁶ SBE 4, p. 119; Geldner 3P p. 71.

⁵⁷ In the Gathas, 'house' and related terms are used as a metaphor for a person's state of being; and one of Zarathushtra's terms for the consequences of evil choices is *drujō dāmāna-* the 'house of untruth' (Taraporewala 1951); or the "House of Deceit" (Insler 1975); or the 'house of the lie' (Skjaervo 2006) ~ a deluded, deceived, ignorant, unenlightened (dark) state of being (see *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*).

⁵⁸ The conversion of lashes into a cash fine is discussed in *Part Five: The Vendidad, An Overview*.

⁵⁹ Ch. 14 in its entirety (§§ 1 - 18) are devoted to the punishments for killing a water dog (Darmesteter thinks probably a beaver SBE 4, p. 155 ft. 6), which may be summarized as follows ~ words in round parentheses are in Darmesteter's translation, words in square brackets are additions by me. All of these punishments appear to be for one act of killing (of a water dog) which seems quite fantastical. We do know that the enormous number of whippings specified here could, at the priests' discretion, be converted to a cash fine (see *Part Five: The Vendidad, An Overview*). But the numerous other punishments (all in this life) boggle the mind if they were intended to be inflicted cummulatively. It is possible that they were various options available to the priests who decided which punishments to inflict ~ depending perhaps on the ability of the 'sinner' to pay. That is the only way in which this chapter makes sense (to me). But even so, for the average person, the 10,000s each of ritual items could only have been paid over many years, if not a lifetime ~ giving the religious authorities a free supply of goods and income for on-going rituals. In some of these sections, the reference to 'godly men' would likely be to priests, or persons designated by the priest.

§§ 1 - 2. A person who "smites one of those water dogs ... so that he gives up the ghost and the soul parts from the body ..." pays the penalty of "ten thousand [*baēvarā*] stripes" each with two kinds whips (i.e. 20,000 stripes total); and each of the following additional atonements;

§§ 2 - 3; "... bring ... ten thousand loads of hard, well dried, well examined wood ...[and] ten thousand loads of soft wood ... of any sweet-scented plant..." to the ritual fire;

§ 4 "... tie and consecrate ten thousand bundles of baresma ... ten thousand Zaothra libations with the Haoma and the sacred meat, cleanly prepared and well strained ... by a pious man [ft. 5 "A Mobed ..."]...";

§ 5 "... kill ten thousand snakes [of one kind] ... ten thousand snakes [of another kind]... ten thousand tortoises, ... ten thousand land frogs, ... ten thousand water frogs ... ten thousand corn-carrying ants [of one kind] ... [and] ten thousand ants [of another kind] ...";

§ 6 "... kill ten thousand earth worms; ... [and] ten thousand horrid flies. ... Fill up ten thousand holes for the unclean [ft. 6 "The holes at which the unclean are washed [citing Pahl. commentary]."] (SBE 4, p. 167);

§§ 6 - 7 "... give to godly men twice seven sets of implements for the fire ... Two (loads of the) proper materials ... a broom; a pair of tongs; a pair of round bellows ... an adze ... a saw ... by means of which the worshippers of Mazda procure wood for the fire...";

§ 8 "... give to godly men a set of the priestly instruments of which the priests make use ..." [listing ten types ~ with 2 types of "cups" listed in the plural ~ and including one type of whip with which punishments were inflicted];

§ 9 "... give to godly men a set of war implements of which the warriors make use ... a javelin ... a knife ... a club ... a bow ... a quiver with shoulder-belt and thirty brass-headed arrows, ... a sling ... with thirty sling stones, ... a cuirass, ... a hauberk, ... a girdle, ... a pair of greaves."

§ 10 - 11 "... give to godly men a set of all the implements of which the husbandmen make use, ... A plough with share and yoke, an ox whip a mortar of stone, a hand-mill for grinding corn; A spade ... one measure of silver and one measure of gold. How much silver? ... The price of a stallion. ... How much gold? ... The price of a camel."

§ 12 "... procure a rill of running water for godly husbandmen ... How large is the rill? ... The depth of a dog, and the breadth of a dog."

§ 13 "... give a piece of arable land to godly men ... As much as can be watered with such a rill on both sides."

§ 14 "... procure for godly men a house with ox-stalls ... give to godly men ... beds with cushions ...";

§ 15 "... give to a godly man a virgin maid ... A sister or a daughter of his, ... with earrings in her ears, and past her fifteenth year."

§ 16 "... give to holy men twice seven head of small cattle, ... twice seven whelps ... throw twice seven bridges over canals."

§ 17 "... repair twice nine stables that are out of repair ... cleanse twice nine dogs from skin humours, hair wax, vermin, and all the diseases that are produced on the body of a dog ... treat twice nine godly men to their fill of meat, bread, strong drink, and wine."

§ 18 "This is the atonement, this is the penalty that he shall undergo ... If he shall undergo it, he shall enter the world of the holy ones: if he shall not undergo it, he shall fall down into the world of the wicked, into that dark world, made of darkness, the offspring of darkness."

SBE 4, pp. 165 - 172; Darmesteter translation.

⁶⁰ SBE 4, p. 172; Geldner 3P p. 100. However, the Avestan text in Geldner does not show the last few words in Darmesteter's translation ~ "that dark world, made of darkness, the offspring of darkness." Nor does Geldner footnote any differences in the mss. available to him. I do not know on what mss. Darmesteter may have relied for his translation. In any event, his additional words "that dark world, made of darkness, the offspring of darkness" are identical with his descriptions in Ch. 5, § 62, quoted in the main part of this chapter.

⁶¹ The penalties listed in Ch. 18, §§ 70 ~ 74, are quite absurd (for one act of prohibited sexual intercourse), and one wonders whether cash fines were also allowed to replace such penalties (as they were with whippings). These penalties include,

- ~ slaying 1,000 head of small cattle and Zaothra libations (for the ritual),
- ~ bringing 1,000 loads of soft wood to the fire,
- ~ tying and consecrating 1,000 bundles of baresma,
- ~ offering up 1,000 Zaothra libations to the good waters,
- ~ together with haoma and the meat, cleanly prepared and well strained "by a pious man"
- ~ together with the roots of the tree known as Hadha-naepata.

As you can see, these atonements (or possibly their cash equivalents) would have been far beyond the reach of an average person. Would he then have been indebted to the priestly establishment for many years to come, paying them off (if he was so foolish as to accept such a debt)?

⁶² Ch. 18 § 76, referring to atonement by paying specified penalties, states what happens to a person who pays the penalty, and one who does not. These two types of 'existence' echo ideas from the Gathas, but are used in a context which is unrelated to the existence of the truth-possessing [*ahūm ... ašaonqm*], or an existence of falsehood or lies [*ahūm ... drvatqm*] and darkness.

"If he shall pay it, he shall enter the world of the holy ones [*ahūm ... ašaonqm* 'existence of the truth-possessing']; if he shall not pay it, he shall fall into the world of the wicked [*ahūm ... drvatqm* 'existence of the false ones'], into that dark world [*təmaŋhəm*], made of darkness, ... the offspring of darkness [*təmasciθrəm*]." *Vendidad* Ch. 18 § 76, Darmesteter translation, SBE 4 p. 203; Avestan words from Geldner 3P p. 122.

⁶³ Skjaervo 2003 shows *parō.asna-* as 'future'. And of course, *ahu-* means 'existence, life'.

⁶⁴ SBE 4, p. 153 - 154; Geldner 3P p. 89.

⁶⁵ See *Part Five: Overview of Languages & Texts*, which includes pictures of the holes in existing mss.

⁶⁶ Regarding the fiend named and described as "Vizaresha carries off in bonds the souls of the wicked" ~ most of the names of demons in the YAv. texts are in fact the human vices they personify (See *Part One: Does the Devil Exist?*). But Darmesteter does not explain this name 'Vizaresha'. Nor was I able to find its meaning in Skjaervo 2003.

⁶⁷ SBE 4, pp. 211 - 213; Geldner 3P pp. 127 - 128.

⁶⁸ *Vendidad*, Ch. 19, §§ 30 - 34, SBE 4, pp. 213 - 214.

⁶⁹ Discussed in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

⁷⁰ The word *aogəmadaēcā* appears in YHapt. 41.5 in which Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate it as "we declare ourselves" (p. 112). So apparently, this text was seen by its authors as a declaration of doctrine (as they understood it to be).

⁷¹ JamaspAsa, in his translation of the *Aogemadaeca*, Introductory Remarks, p. 9, states that there are 29 Av. quotations in the Pazand version of this text, and 30 in the Pahlavi version, but that only 5 of these Av. quotations are found in extant Avestan texts. So I question: Did the quotations which cannot be identified come from genuine YAv. texts ~ composed in YAv. times (even if such have not survived), or were they from a YAv. text composed long after YAv. times (like the *Vendidad*), or were made up by the author of the *Aogemadaeca* to give his view the force of Av. authority (just as in so many YAv. texts, Zarathushtra's (purported) questions and Ahura Mazda's (purported) answers were made up to give authority to the rules of the religious establishment)? We have no way of knowing, except that the descriptions of 'hell' in the (purported) YAv. quotations in the *Aogemadaeca* are not consistent with the absence of such a 'hell' in any surviving YAv. text composed during YAv. times.

⁷² K. M. JamaspAsa, *Aogemadaeca*, § 28; the Avestan words of this YAv. quotation appear at p. 30; JamaspAsa's translation of this quotation appears at p. 61. His translation differs from mine in a few respects ~ such as translating *ayra-* as 'evil', whereas I translate it 'harmful, hurtful' based on its original Arya meaning as seen by Bartholomae, Taraporewala and Hoffmann. (see *Part One: Does the Devil Exist?*). The word is spelled *angra-* in the Gathas, and in some YAv. texts, and as *ayra-* in other YAv. texts (the pronunciation of Av. letters is detailed in *Overview: The Avestan Script, Pronunciation & Genesis*).

⁷³ For a more detailed discussion of their meaning(s): see *Part One: Does the Devil Exist?* for the meanings of the name 'Angra Mainyu', and see *Part One: The Beneficial Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*, for a discussion of the meanings of *spənta- mainyu-*.

⁷⁴ E. W. West translation, SBE Vol. 37, p. 467.

⁷⁵ See *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*.

⁷⁶ I made a very careful study of all YAv. texts as well as the *Dinkard* in SBE, and in K. M. JamaspAsa's, translation of the *Aogemadaeca*. Being human, it is possible that I may have overlooked something, but I do not think I did.

⁷⁷ See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell* for the evidence from the Gathas that there is no 'hell' in an afterlife in the Gathas.

⁷⁸ Discussed in *Part Three: Heaven & Hell in Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*.

⁷⁹ "... how shall the faithful man drink the libations cleanly prepared ... and ... Mithra will be pleased with him and without anger? ... Let them wash their bodies three days and three nights; let them undergo thirty strokes for the sacrifice and prayer unto Mithra, ... let them wash their bodies two day and two nights; let them undergo twenty strokes for the sacrifice and prayer unto Mithra..." Yt. 10.121 - 122; Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 151. Darmesteter's ft. 3 states these strokes with the whip were an "expiation" which purges the adept from sins and makes them fit for offering a sacrifice to Mithra. He concludes that this passage may have been "the origin of the painful trials through which the adepts of the Mithriac mysteries had to go before being admitted to initiation" (citing an ancient source).

⁸⁰ Detailed in *Part Five: The Vendidad, An Overview*.

⁸¹ The later idea in Medieval Christianity of selling 'indulgences' whereby a person could purchase reprieve from the time he would otherwise spend in hell in an afterlife for his 'sins', had (thankfully) not occurred to the religious establishment of the *Vendidad*.