

Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts.

Certain Pahlavi texts have inaccurately colored the thinking of many people ~ scholars and laypersons, Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians alike ~ into concluding that the idea of hell as a place of torment was invented by Zarathushtra.

The notion of a place of cruel as punishments in an afterlife first appears (in the Zoroastrian religion) in Pahlavi texts.

Because of the huge destruction of texts, and the killing of the learned following the fall of the Sasanian Empire, it is difficult to know from surviving evidence when the idea of hell as a place of torture and punishment in the afterlife first entered the Zoroastrian religion. During the Sasanian Empire? After its fall? We do not know. Was the idea of such a hell a Pahlavi invention? Was it borrowed from other religions? We do not know.¹

However, we do know *why* this idea entered the religion. It appeared at a time when doubts were widespread regarding the religion, and an incentive was needed to secure obedience to the priestly establishment. A Pahlavi Fragment,² reveals that a person goes to hell if he does not submit to priestly control. The 'hell' of Pahlavi times was a control mechanism (control through fear) to ensure obedience. This Fragment text says,

"... men go to hell for this *reason*, when they do not submit *their* persons to priestly control (aerpatistan), and do not become acquainted with duties and good works." E. W. West translation.³

Notice, priestly control comes first, then 'duties' (which would be dictated by the priests), and then 'good works' in last place ~ and even so, 'good works' would have been defined by the priests, not by each individual ~ "... man by man for himself ..." Y30.2, Insler 1975, as the Gathas require.

I will give you some highlights from a few texts which are well known, and end with a Pahlavi Fragment on 'heaven' which is not so well known. These sources show that (in some respects), certain Pahlavi texts are close to Zarathushtra thought; others contain echoes of it; and yet others are very far removed from it.

Some preliminary matters.

So far as I am aware, no Zoroastrian texts have survived which were written during Sasanian times (only some stone inscriptions have survived). All the Pahlavi texts we have today, were written after the Arab invasion, although many of them tried to record and preserve older knowledge and traditions.

Pazand is (more or less) the Pahlavi language written in Avestan script. Why they felt the need to do this, I do not know. In addition, Kent speaks of several Pahlavi "dialects".⁴ When I speak in general terms of the Pahlavi language and texts, this includes all such dialects as well as the Pazand texts.

Pahlavi (Middle Persian) is descended from Old Persian, the language of the Achaemenian inscriptions. Old Persian and Avestan shared a common ancestral language, but Old Persian is several centuries younger than Avestan. So Middle Persian (Pahlavi) is an even later descendant of Avestan.⁵

To avoid repeated references, I footnote here,⁶ the other chapters, in which I discuss the following:

(a) The evidence which supports Zarathushtra's ideas that 'heaven' is a state of being that personifies the truth (good, right) order of existence; that it commences in mortal existence (sporadically), and becomes complete in an existence that is no longer bound by mortality; and that his notion of 'hell' is a wrongheaded, deceived state of being in mortal existence only;

(b) The evidence that in other Avestan texts and Fragments, 'heaven' is sometimes described as a state of being and sometimes as a place of reward; but even in some YAv. texts, the good state of being that is the 'good' reward occurs incrementally in this life and eventually completely in an existence that is no longer bound by mortality; and

(c) The evidence that in none of the Avestan texts (that were composed during Avestan times) is there any mention of damnation in a hell of cruel punishments in an afterlife.

In the translations used here, words in *italics* are interpretive aids added by the translator (they are not in the Pahlavi text). And the translators sometimes show applicable Pahlavi words in round parentheses.

'*Hell*', in Pahlavi, is *dôzhakh*, which E. W. West says derives from the Avestan "*dushahu*" [*duš.ahu-*] which means 'bad existence'.⁷ A 'bad existence' is a bad state of being. A very bad existence (*acišta-ahu-*) is one of Zarathushtra's terms for the 'bad' reward. So in the very name for 'hell' in Pahlavi, we see the Avestan seed of Zarathushtra's thought.

'*Heaven*', in Pahlavi, is *vahesht*, which West says derives from Avestan *vahišta-ahu-* 'most good existence',⁸ ~ one of the terms for 'heaven' in the Gathas and even more frequently in YAv. texts. A 'most good existence' is a state of being. So here again, in their name for 'heaven' we see the Avestan seed of Zarathushtra's thought.

In Summary: Heaven and Hell in Pahlavi texts may be summarized as follows.

Their notion of 'heaven' is inconsistent. Sometimes, it is a good state of being that reflects Zarathushtra's thought. Sometimes it is a good place that is described in ways that echo the Gathas. And in at least one text, 'heaven' has become just a happy place in which material luxury plays a large part (almost nothing spiritual there).

Their notion of 'hell' sometimes has echoes of a bad state of being. But most often the Pahlavi texts show various paradigms of 'hell' as a place of punishment for wrongdoing ~ sometimes in this life; sometimes only in an afterlife ~ in one text a short 'hell' of 3 days duration and a soul refining process at the end of times, in another text, a 'hell' of "long duration" ~ till the time of a general resurrection of the body; and in yet another text a 'hell' of 9,000 years. As we go through the evidence you will see that their ideas of 'hell' as a *place* of punishment in an afterlife are inconsistent. They lack reasoning. They have nothing to do with Zarathushtra's thought. And in at least one text, the details of torment are calculated to control human behavior through fear.

Once a human being is afraid, reasoned thinking is paralyzed ~ which is exactly the kind of fear based theology Zarathushtra opposed and tried to overcome,⁹ ~ except that in the theology of Zarathushtra's culture, the control through fear was all through fearful things in mortal existence.

I speculate that after Avestan times, a fear-based theology entered the Zoroastrian religion each time that the religious establishment had no power to maintain its authority. Specifically,

Following the fall of the Achaemenian kings, when the religious establishment no longer enjoyed the patronage of the king and the aristocracy for its elaborate and expensive rituals, I think it attempted to protect its income generating powers by specifying horrific numbers of whippings (in this life), for a multitude of infractions that were not intrinsically wrong, which could be converted into a cash fine, as we see in the *Vendidad*.¹⁰

Following the Arab invasion, the Zoroastrian religious establishment had no authority to enforce *any* punishments in this life (let alone those detailed in the *Vendidad*). And they resorted to threats of punishments in the afterlife, to protect their income generating rituals.

Am I just prejudiced? Well, you can judge for yourself, as you read the evidence. Let us start with the worst of the Pahlavi texts - the one very far from Zarathushtra's thought - the *Arda Viraf Namah*.

Arda Viraf Namah.

All references to this text are to its translation by Martin Haug & E. W. West in 1872.¹¹

This text recognizes and expresses certain good values that we find in the Gathas, and YAv. texts. But primarily this text specializes in the torments of 'hell'.

It specifically tells us that its descriptions of hell originated from a (supposed) journey to the world of 'the spirits', enabled by an hallucinatory drug. And yet, on the subject of 'hell', this text has not only received the most attention from scholars (much like the popularity enjoyed by horror movies), but it continues to inform the inaccurate notion widely circulated today, that Zarathushtra invented the idea of hell.

Ironic indeed when we consider that Zarathushtra valued the use of reason,¹² in arriving at beliefs, and was opposed to mind altering drugs which in his society resulted in some of the cruel practices of the priests of his culture, which he rejected.¹³

And here, let me be upfront with my own bias. Any drug is a material thing (a chemical), which when ingested, affects another material thing (the brain), so if it is an hallucinatory drug, we experience ideas, feelings, visual images, a 'high', and other things that the brain generates under the influence of the drug. But spirit, is not a material thing. I do not think that a material chemical can enable access to pure spirit - the divine within. Nor do I think a material chemical can enable access to the divine in a non-mortal existence (the Pahlavi 'world of the spirits').

Returning to the drug induced 'journey', this text explains that the religious establishment was confronted by a problem: people no longer believed in the elaborate rituals and purifications mandated by the priests (none of which are to be found in the Gathas).

To explain this loss of belief, the author of the *Arda Viraf Namah* first mentions the widespread loss of knowledge that occurred after the fall of the Achaemenian Empire,¹⁴ and again after the fall of the Sasanian Empire - all of which created doubt and disbelief. Understandably, the author of this text could not specifically detail the after effects of the Arab invasion, so he simply concludes,

"And much law and justice were administered according to different religions and different creeds, and the people of this religion ... were in doubt." Ch. 1, § 17 (p. 144 - 146).

So a group of priests decided to do something about it. The text says,

"And afterwards, there were other magi and dasturs of the religion, and some of their number were loyal and apprehensive. And an assembly of them was summoned ... and there were speeches and good ideas of many kinds ... that it is necessary for us to seek a means so that some one of us may go, and bring intelligence from the spirits, that the people who exist in this age, shall know whether these Yazishn and Drun and Afringan *ceremonies* and Nirang *prayers*, and ablution and purifications which we bring into operation, attain unto God, or unto the demons, and come to the relief of our souls, or not.'" Ch. 1 §§ 17 - 27, Haug & West translation.¹⁵

Notice, the author does not say that there were doubts and disbelief regarding Zarathushtra's teachings as a way of life ~ the path of truth, the path of goodness. According to the words of this text, the doubts and disbelief pertained to the rituals, ceremonies, and purification requirements.¹⁶

The text goes on to say that this convocation of priests selected seven men and asked them to decide who among them would be the best person to go to the spirit world and return with the necessary information that would dispell all such doubt and disbelief. Viraf was chosen for this task.

The use of mind-altering drugs to (purportedly) access the spirit world was an old Indo-Iranian practice,¹⁷ (possibly originating even earlier), and is condemned in the Gathas ("[...When shall they fear the folly of that intoxicating drink, ...](#)" Y48.10). The drug given to Viraf was a drug (not known today) called the 'narcotic of Vishtasp', and sometimes (ironically!) 'the narcotic of Zarathushtra'.¹⁸ (Apparently people were good at product branding even in those days!). The text says,

"And then those dasturs of the religion filled three golden cups with wine and the narcotic of Vishtasp, ... and he [Viraf] swallowed the wine and narcotic, and said grace whilst conscious, and slept upon the carpet." Ch. 2 §§ 29 - 31, p. 151.

It is interesting that the text does not say Viraf experienced a spiritual revelation, or spiritual insight, or a spiritual 'high' of any kind. The text informs us that "the soul of Viraf went, from the body to the Chinvat Bridge" where he was given a guided tour of heaven and hell by certain angels. And after "seven days and nights" his soul "came back" to his body. He had something to eat and drink. And then dictated to "a writer who is wise and learned" all that he saw, and all his words the scribe "wrote correctly, clearly and explicitly." (pp. 152 - 153).

A cynical view might conclude that this (supposed) travel to another world and the descriptions of 'heaven' and 'hell' were manufactured to provide a (supposed) supernatural source to bribe people into believing that performing the rituals would earn them 'heaven'; and frighten them into thinking that failing to do so (and also engaging in wrongdoing) would earn them 'hell'.

A more charitable view might be that this way to get information from the world of the spirits was a tradition, genuinely believed in. However, in that event, the horrors of 'hell' described by Viraf would have been the product of his own mind, under the influence of the drug.

But I am inclined to think that the cynical view is the accurate one, for 2 reasons:

1. The immediate (and only) focus of this drug induced trip was 'reward' and 'punishment' ~ the classic way to control behavior;
2. His account of what he saw contains fragments of information that are recognizable (but not always accurate) from earlier Avestan texts, and even from (differing and inconsistent) Pahlavi

schools of thought. The 'spirits' (assuming they felt inclined to communicate with him) could not have been so muddled.¹⁹

3. And his account of what he (supposedly) saw, while under the influence of the narcotic, has no dream-like or other-worldly quality. The account of prohibited behavior and the punishment for it is laid down clearly and precisely ~ like a code of law.

Through 82 tedious chapters the author details (often repetitively) lists of sins and their punishments in hell, calculated to frighten and enslave the timid (and perhaps raise troubling doubts even in the minds of the brave who might think it better to be safe than sorry).²⁰ He devotes only 8 chapters to 'heaven' ~ so you can see where his priorities lay ~ control through fear. The parts of this text devoted to 'hell' are a spiritual wasteland. The man who authored these parts was, what I can only call, spiritually challenged.

It would be easy to summarize what follows (and shorten this chapter), but then you would never know whether my opinions regarding this (awful) text are well founded. I therefore have opted to give you some details, so that you can form your own opinions (making this chapter a bit longer than I would like).

Hell in this text, is definitely a place, not a state of being. It suggests that the author was drawing information from different strands of traditional beliefs without thinking of their inconsistencies. For example, the author has 2 angels taking Viraf by the hand and telling him what they will show him.

" ... 'Come on, so that we may show unto thee heaven and hell ... We shall show thee the darkness, and confinement and ingloriousness and misfortune ... in the punishments of hell of various kinds, which the demons and sorcerers and sinners perform. We shall show thee the place of the true and that of the false. We shall show thee ... the reality of God ... and the **non-reality of Akharman and the demons, ...** We shall show thee the ... **punishment** ... which are for the wicked, ... **from Akharman and the molestations of the demons**.'" Ch. 5, §§ 7 ~ 13, p. 156; 'Akharman' is another way of saying Pahlavi 'Ahriman' ~ the chief devil.

It is difficult to understand how on the one hand, the author could express the idea that the chief devil and his associate demons had **non-reality**, (which actually accords with the Gathas and is also stated in the Pahlavi Dinkard 6),²¹ and on the other hand describe these **non-real** demons inflicting **physical punishment**. This inconsistency reflects 2 different strands of beliefs.

In the *Arda Viraf Namah*, 'hell' is a place to which the '**soul**' is taken after death. Yet strangely, *all* the punishments are inflicted on a **material body**. More muddled thinking.

The author also mentions (p. 168) the three footsteps "on" the hell (*dôzhakh*, 'bad existence') of evil thoughts, words and deeds, but (as in the YAv. Fragment) these occur after death and are described as places. They are not the 'hell' of bad ways of thinking, speaking and acting in this life ~ the 'most bad existence' of the Gathas and some YAv. texts.

In this text, 'hell' consists of many separate areas (like the many rooms of a very large house) ~ with each 'sinner' being punished in one area, for one particular 'sin' ~ which is silly, because no one commits only one type of wrongdoing. People (even 'good' ones) commit many different kinds of wrongdoing. The text does not mention how the same person is punished for multiple different 'sins'.

Many of the 'sins' and punishments are repetitive ~ the same sins punished differently in different chapters. Many punishments are for 'sins' that are intrinsically wrong. But many are also for 'sins' that are not intrinsically wrong, but were bothering the religious establishment (including abandoning religious beliefs, being doubtful, and being unthankful for the religion).²² There are chapters of punishments for wives who displeased, nagged, or defied their husbands, and (multiple chapters!) for wives who were unfaithful. No punishments are mentioned for husbands who displeased, nagged, or were cruel to their wives, or who were unfaithful.

But it is interesting, that (in one of the repetitive 'sins') this text remembered the Avestan belief that a promise must be kept whether made to a friend or enemy.²³ One of the 'sins' is that of a "wicked man who, ... committed many breaches of promise, and broke promises with the pious and with the wicked, for both are promises, alike with the pious and alike with the wicked." (Ch. 52, §§ 5 - 7, p. 182).

There is one section which (inconsistently) echoes in a distorted way the Gatha idea that 'hell' exists in this life ~ in mortal (material) existence. The author has Viraf saying that he was taken to a place "below the Chinvat bridge, into a desert, and was shown hell in the earth of the middle of that desert" which was filled with demons and demonesses. Viraf says "... I was frightened, because I considered that they would shake the seven regions of the earth which heard that noise and groaning..." (Ch. 53, §§ 2 - 5, p. 183). So in this instance, a 'hell on earth' ? Perhaps. But still a place, not a state of being.

Sometimes the type of punishment described is related to the type of wrongful conduct being punished ~ (a distorted form of the law of consequences in the Gathas). Here are some examples,

A man who kept false measures of the goods he weighed, and who mixed water with wine, put dust into grain, and sold such things at high prices, extorting and stealing from good people, was punished by being forced to measure dust and ashes with a bushel and gallon, and then having to eat it ~ continuously (Ch. 27, pp. 172 - 173).

A man who was a bad ruler and who was unmerciful and inflicted torments and punishments on those he ruled, was punished by being flogged by 50 demons, who used "darting serpents" to do the flogging (Ch. 28, p. 173).

A man who had committed slander and "embroiled people one with the other" was punished by having his tongue gnawed by "noxious creatures". Ch. 29, pp. 173 - 174.

It is a fact, beyond dispute, that every person on earth has done some good and some wrong. So punishing in hell any creature who has done 'bad' things, but who also has done some 'good' is unjust. And the religious establishment was puzzled how to solve this problem. In the *Arda Viraf Namah*, they made an attempt to do so (another example of muddled thinking).

In one chapter, the soul of a "lazy" a man who "never did any good work" is punished by having his whole body gnawed by a noxious creature, with the exception of his right foot, which was exempt from punishment because it had committed one good deed by kicking a bundle of grass before a ploughing ox. (Ch. 32, p. 175. A similar example ~ again with the right foot but in different circumstances ~ is detailed in Ch. 60 p. 186).

But this is hardly a solution that would satisfy a reasoning mind. It would not be possible in the course of a 'bad' (or lazy) man's life, that the right foot alone would not have been involved in any of

the other wrongful (or lazy) deeds the man committed but yet was exempt from punishment because of the one good deed it committed. In addition, more than one part of the body (including the brain) is usually involved in committing wrongdoing. By the logic of this text, if a wrongful (or lazy) man uses his whole body to do just one act of goodness, he would be exempt from punishment in 'hell' for all his bad deeds, yet the *Arda Viraf Namah* in chapter after chapter stands for the opposite conclusion.

Duration. In this text the duration of 'hell' is 9,000 years ~ not eternal. For example, in one chapter, the persons being punished are said to cry out "Are not these 9,000 years yet completed, when they should release us from this hell?" (Ch. 54 §§ 10 - 11, p. 184).

Viraf does not mention what the starting date of the 9,000 years might be.

Do the 9,000 years start from an end of times date? If so, and if (as the text says), the soul of a 'wicked' man goes to hell right after death), then the earlier a person dies (before the end of times starting date), the longer would be his time of punishment ~ much longer than those who die closer to the end of times date. Hardly justice.

Or do the 9,000 years start from the date on which each "wicked man" dies and goes to hell? If so, then (as we approach the end of times) by the time the last "wicked man" dies and goes to 'hell', hell would be largely empty ~ a bit like those abandoned apartment buildings in New York city in the 1950s ~ hardly worth the expense of maintenance for 9,000 more years ~ all those serpents, all those demons.

To summarize: This text promotes a paradigm of hell that is full of holes. A paradigm of 'hell' as a place of torment in which 'bad' people are punished for various 'sins' for 9,000 years ~ by an all good, loving, intelligent, reasoning, 'God' ! It is amazing (is it not?) how much man-made, muddled, evil thinking we attribute to the Divine! And this in a religion founded on reason ('...He, through reason, (is the) truth establisher...' Y31.7; '... May the Giver of reason instruct through good thinking (the course) of my direction (so as) to be the charioteer of (my) tongue.' Y50.6 my translation).²⁴

This paradigm of a punitive 'hell' as a place of torment in the afterlife did not exist in the religion during a period of time spanning at least several centuries, and possibly more than a millennium, after the religion was founded. Nor indeed was it a part of the religion, as practiced by other schools of thought during Pahlavi times. It was the invention of a group of priests in one region, to frighten people into supporting the rituals on which that group's livelihood depended.

And yet people point to it (with pride!) to show that Zarathushtra invented the idea of a 'hell' of torments in the afterlife. How did we so lose our way?

Hamestagan. In this text, those whose good works outweigh their sins go to 'heaven'. Those whose sins outweigh their good works go to 'hell'. And "those men whose good works and sin were equal" are sent to (what Farrokh Vajifdar called) the in-between place, *Hamestagan* which (according to Haug & West) means 'the ever-stationary'. Why 'stationary'? I do not know. This text says, "Their punishment is cold or heat from the revolution of the atmosphere; and they have no other adversity." (Ch. 6, p. 157).

Once again, not a 'just' end, because these people do not suffer the same punishment as others who have committed the same wrongs (just more in number). And they have done as much good as evil,

yet their good is not rewarded with anything good ~ only with a partial remission of punishment. And all this in the name of a 'God' who is intelligent, just, truth personified.

Heaven. In this text (the *Arda Viraf Namah*) there are some rather lovely ideas of the kinds of good conduct that earns 'heaven'. But there is very little spirituality in the descriptions of 'heaven' itself which (in addition to happiness and light) is a place of mostly material luxury and rewards (for an intangible "soul!"). These descriptions of 'heaven' promote the stated need for Viraf's (supposed) journey to the world of the 'spirits' ~ to provide an incentive (through a good reward) for practicing the rituals and ceremonies on which the livelihood of that religious establishment depended.

Viraf's 'heaven' has different levels. At the top of the heap are those who in the world supported "the whole ritual of the religion". They are "seated above the other souls" (Ch. 14 § 3, p. 163). Whereas those who did not perform rituals and prayers (including, be it said, 'chanting the Gathas'), but did "other good works" are assigned to the 2 lowest levels of 'heaven' (Chs.7 and 8, pp. 157 - 158). By the time of this text, the grammar and vocabulary of Avestan were no longer understood, so the chanting of the Gathas would have been just an important ritual chant,²⁵ ~ but how lucky for us that they did! because their doing so ensured the survival of the Gathas until modern times, when the GAv. language could be decoded.

Viraf's general descriptions of 'heaven' echo some of the ideas in YAv. Fragments ~ a place with sweet scents, fragrance, where the soul of a good person is met by a beautiful maiden representing the soul's "own religion and his own deeds" (Ch. 4, §§ 18 - 23, pp. 154 - 155). The soul of a good person thereupon passes over Chinvat Bridge which has become "nine javelin-lengths" in width (indicating that it is easy for a good soul to cross over the bridge), with the assistance of various virtues in allegorical or angelic form (Ch. 5, pp. 155 - 156).²⁶

Then (on his guided tour of 'heaven') Viraf took 4 footsteps (the word "place" in the following quotations is not in *italics*, indicating that it is in the Pahlavi text).

"I put forth the first footstep to the star track, on Humat, the place where good thoughts (*humat*) are *received* with hospitality." In this heaven the "souls of the pious" are "glittering as the stars; and their throne and seat were under the radiance, and splendid and full of glory." This (lowest) heaven is for those who did some good works, but "who, in the world, offered no prayers, and chanted no Gathas, and contracted no next of kin marriage, and have exercised no sovereignty, nor rulership, nor chieftainship." (Ch. 7, pp. 157 - 158). Parenthetically, there is no next of kin marriage in the Gathas.²⁷

So here we have 4 factors that disqualify a person from a 'higher' heaven. Yet none of these failures is intrinsically 'wrong'. Three of these factors are a failure to comply with what was mandated by the religious establishment of that time period, and the fourth factor is simply that the person is not a ruler. This lowest 'heaven' was not for those who had power ~ how different from the Pazand *Mainyo-i-khard*, in which the soul is evaluated, or weighed, with judgment that is true ~ regardless of whether the soul is that of someone who is rich and powerful, or poor and humble, the determination is made without favoritism of any kind.²⁸ Returning to the *Arda Viraf Namah*, (Viraf speaking),

(2) "When I put forth the second footstep, *it was* to Hukht of the moon track, the place where good words (*hukht*) find hospitality". The lack of rulership is not mentioned as a disqualifier here, but in all other respects, these souls are described exactly as those on the first level. This (second lowest) heaven is for "those souls who, in the world, offered no prayers, and chanted no Gathas, and contracted no next of kin marriage, but through other good works they have come hither; and their brightness is like unto the brightness of the moon." (Ch. 8, p. 158).

(3) "When I put forth the third footstep on Huvarsht, there where good deeds (*huvarsht*) are received with hospitality..." This 3d level of heaven has a "radiance" called the "highest of the highest ... like unto the brightness of the sun", and is the heaven of those "who in the world, exercised good sovereignty and rulership and chieftainship." (Ch. 9 p. 158). Here again is a favoritism based on (good) power, authority (which presumably would have included the chiefs of the religious establishment).

(4) "I put forth the fourth footstep unto the radiance of Garodman [GAv. *garō dāmāna*- 'house of song'], the all-glorious...". What follows are echoes of the YAv. Fragment in which other souls meet the arriving soul and ask him questions about how he got here, etc. Nothing is said about what the soul did to deserve this highest heaven, but the spiritual essence of the fire comes to him and compliments him for being a "fine supplier" of firewood ~ presumably for religious ceremonies (Ch. 10, § 6 p. 159).

It is interesting that these descriptions of the first three 'heavens' are said to be the star track of good thoughts, the moon track of good words, and the place of good deeds which has the brightness of the sun.

Next, (echoing the *Zadsparam* story but without any understanding of its metaphoric significance),²⁹ Viraf was taken by "Vohuman" (Av. *vohu- manah-*) who introduces him to 'God' - "...This is Auharmazd..."; (really!?!), and he was taken by "Srosh" (YAv. *sraoša-*) around heaven "from place to place", saw many angels and archangels, and the "guardian angels" of "Zarathusht", his followers, and other legendary figures (Ch. 11, pp. 159 - 160). Here again, "Srosh" is an angel. There is no understanding of the underlying idea that listening to and implementing the Word of Wisdom (*sraoša-/sraoša-*) leads the soul to a state of being that is the most good existence (*ahuvahišta-*), the true order of existence (*aša- vahišta-*) ~ Zarathushtra's paradise.

Then follow general descriptions of the rewards for approved behavior ~ without linking them to any particular 'level' of 'heaven. Here, in addition to light and happiness, the rewards are material things ~ thrones, embroidered clothes, jewels, power, triumph.

Viraf speaking:

The souls of those who "chanted the Gathas and used the prescribed prayers (*yeshts*), and were steadfast in the good religion ... were in gold-embroidered and silver-embroidered clothes" which "seemed to me very sublime." (Ch. 12 §§ 7 - 10 p. 161).

Those who contracted next of kin marriage were "in material-fashioned splendor" which "seemed to me sublime." (Ch. 12 §§ 11 - 13).

The "souls of good rulers and monarchs, who ever increased their greatness, goodness, power and triumph thereby ... walk in splendor in their golden trowsers. And it seemed to me sublime." (Ch. 12 §§ 14 - 17, p. 162).

The "souls of the great and of truthful speakers who walked in lofty splendor with great glory. And it seemed to me sublime." (Ch. 12 §§ 18 - 19, p. 162).

The "souls" of women of "excellent" thought, word and action, who were "submissive to control, who consider their husbands as lords" were dressed "in clothing embroidered with gold and silver, and set with jewels". These were women who "honored water, ... fire, ... earth and trees, cattle and sheep and all other good creations ... And they performed Yazishn and Dron ceremonies ... and they performed the rights and praises of the angels, ... practiced acquiescence and conformity, reverence and obedience to their husbands and lords, and they were without doubts on the religion of Mazdayasnians ... diligent in the doing of good works, ... abstainers from sin. And it seemed to me sublime." (Ch. 13, pp. 162 - 163).

To think is to doubt. But with doubts about the religion rampant in the community, the author's idea of an ideal woman was one who was "without doubt" ~ one who did not think, question, and was obedient and diligent about the rituals. But did you notice? These women "performed" the described ceremonies. What are we to make of that? And of course, the reward of heaven for performers of the ceremonies was not limited to women.

"I also saw the souls of performers of the Yazishn ceremony and of those who know the scriptures by heart, splendid among the lofty, and exalted among the great. And it seemed to me sublime." (Ch. 14, §§ 1 - 2).

"I also saw the souls of those who solemnized the whole *ritual of the* religion, and performed and directed the worship of God, who were seated above the other souls, and their good works stood as high as heaven. And it seemed to me very sublime." (Ch. 14 §§ 3 - 6, p. 163). The priests?

The souls of warriors,³⁰ were equipped with "well-made arms ... made of gold studded with jewels, well-ornamented and all embroidered; and they were in wonderful trowsers, with much pomp and triumph. And it seemed to me sublime." (Ch. 14, §§ 7 - 10 p. 163).

The souls of those who killed "noxious creatures" and advanced the "prosperity" of waters, fire, trees, the earth, "were exalted and adorned. And it seemed to me very sublime." (Ch. 14, §§ 11 - 13 p. 163).

The souls of agriculturalists "in a splendid place, and glorious and thick majestic clothing" offered praises, thanksgiving, "their throne also is great, and the place they occupy is good. And it seemed to me sublime." (Ch. 14, §§ 14 - 18, pp. 163 - 164).

The souls of shepherds who cared for their animals "walked among those who are brilliant, on a beautiful eminence, in great pleasure and joy. And it seemed to me very sublime." (Ch. 15, §§ 1 - 8, p. 164).

The souls of householders and justices who were heads of village families and "exercised mediation and authority, and made a desolate place prosperous ... brought conduits, streams and fountains for the improvement of tillage and cultivation..." were rewarded with "many golden thrones, fine carpets and cushions decked with rich cloth" all of which "seemed to me very sublime." (Ch. 15,

§§ 9 - 15, pp. 164 - 165). I love that those who protected and prospered the environment were held in esteem. But rewarded with thrones, carpets and cushions?

"I also saw the souls of the faithful, the teachers and inquirers in the greatest gladness on a splendid throne. And it seemed to me sublime." (Ch. 15, § 16 p. 165).

The "souls of interceders and peace-seekers" enjoyed "brilliance which was like the stars, and moon and sun, and they walked agreeably in the light of the atmosphere." (Ch. 15, §§ 18 - 20, p. 165).

And he concludes: "I also saw the pre-eminent world of the pious, which is the all-glorious light of space, much perfumed with sweet basil (*ocymum*) all-bedecked, all-admired, and splendid, full of glory and every joy and pleasure with which no one is satiated." (Ch. 15 §§ 21 - 22).

Surely, we can all admire (and I do), the many intrinsically good qualities described in this text (good qualities we see echoed in Avestan texts). And there is a certain charm to the scent of sweet basil, perfumes, light, and happiness as descriptions of 'heaven' (even though the fragrances are material) which call to mind the YAv. phrase "the perfume of his soul" and echo YAv. Fragments.³¹

But the other rewards? The thrones? Gold and silver clothes? Jewels? splendid 'trowsers'? "Pomp and triumph"? Enjoyable in the material world, to be sure. Nothing wrong with that. But as an expression of the ultimate spiritual existence? For an intangible 'soul'? ... Sad stuff. But perhaps calculated to appeal to a persecuted minority who were being ground down in utter poverty, and subsistence living.

The Pazand Mainyo-i-khard.

All references here are to the translation by E. W. West in 1871.³²

Just a reminder. The Pahlavi word which has been translated as 'heaven' is *vahesht*, which derives from an Avestan term for 'heaven', *vahišta- ahu-* 'most good existence' ~ a state of being. And the Pahlavi word which has been translated as 'hell' is *dôzhakh*, which derives from an Avestan term for 'hell', "*dushahu*" [*duš.ahu-*] 'bad existence' ~ a state of being.

The *Mainyo-i-khard*, (unlike the *Arda Viraf Namah*) attempts to cover many aspects of the Zoroastrian religion based on earlier knowledge and tradition. Its discussions of 'heaven' and 'hell' are just a small part of the overall text. (This is also true of the *Bundahishn*, which is discussed next).

I have a soft spot for this text, the *Mainyo-i-khard*, and for its original author. True, in some respects its language and ideas are culture bound, but there is so much of goodness in it. And some good advice too. I have no doubt (from what is said in parts of this text ~ especially its Introduction, and its title) that the *Mainyo-i-khard* originally was the work of a single author ~ a thinking, good, caring, insightful soul who loved the original teachings (as best he understood them), and was keen to transmit what he knew about them.³³

However, as the text was copied and re-copied down through the centuries, I think other texts or fragments (authored by other people) may have been added to the copies ~ thus producing the diversity of inconsistent views on the same subject. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that certain topics are scattered throughout the text. For example, 'hell' is described (differently) in Chs.

2, 7, and 21. So I think that disparate texts or fragments were collated into the text we now have. Once again, let us start with 'hell'.

Hell. In this text, we find descriptions of 'hell' as a place (of mild punishment). Even the 'hell' of bad thoughts, bad words and bad actions is described in both ways ~ as a state of being and as a place.

In Ch. 2, 'hell' is evil thoughts (Dushmat), evil words (Duzhukht) and evil actions (Duzhvareshht). Referring to the 'evil' man,

"Afterwards, he totters on, the first footstep on Dushmat (*the place of evil thoughts*), and second on Duzhukht (*the place of evil words*), and the third on Duzhvareshht (*the place of evil deeds*); and the fourth footstep runs in to before the wicked Evil-spirit, and also the remaining demons." Ch. 2 §§ 182 - 183, p. 137.

If if we exclude the words '*the place of*' (because these are insertions by West which are not in the Phalavi text) the words "totters", "footstep" and "on" suggest that the 'bad existence' of evil thoughts, words and actions, have become 3 places.

But in Ch. 7, this same 'hell' of evil thoughts, words and actions, is first described as a state of being.

"And hell [*dôzhakh* 'bad existence'] is first Dushmat (evil thoughts), and second Duzhukht (evil words), and third Duzhvareshht (evil deeds);³⁴ with the fourth footstep, the wicked man arrives at that which is the darkest hell [*dôzhakh* 'bad existence'].

... and always their darkness is such-like as when it will be necessary to hold by the hand". Ch. 7, §§ 20, 21, 31; Pazand words are from the Pazand part, p. 16; English part, p. 141.

So here the 'bad existence' of evil thoughts, words and actions are incremental states of being in mortal, material, existence in which such thoughts, words and actions generate an unenlightened existence ~ the 'darkest bad-existence' (echoes of the Gathas) ~ a state of being in which a person cannot see for himself, and needs a hand.³⁵

But intertwined with this description (§§ 20 and 21) of 'hell' as a bad existence of evil thoughts, words and actions we find descriptions of 'hell' as a place of punishments (§§ 22 - 30), to which demons conduct the "wicked man", where they speak to him "with ridicule and mockery", treat him with "mischief of long duration" and "not pity", and perform upon him unspecified "punishment and torment of various kinds." He experiences severe cold and severe heat is gnawed by noxious creatures "just as a dog *does* a skeleton", experiences severe stench, thick darkness, and is fed "the foulest and vilest food" including venom and poison. (p. 141).³⁶

In these §§ 22 - 30, (except for the gnawing) we see echoes of the YAv. Fragment (which may have been written after YAv. times) in which the place to which the 'bad' are taken after death is described as being very cold, very stinky and very dark, and the soul of the 'bad' person is fed foul food.

But what is so interesting is that even here, where 'hell' is described as a place, we still see echoes of the Gatha metaphors, darkness and foul food.

Darkness here is used in a way that suggests that the author understood its metaphoric significance ~ an unenlightened existence, one that has lost its way.

But foul food here is not used as a metaphor. It is simply added to various other torments.

"And the Evil-Spirit bellows to the demons thus, 'Ask ye from him no tidings since *he is* speared from that which *was* a precious body, and will have come *by* that which is a very bad road;³⁷ but bring ye unto him the foulest and vilest food from the foods that are nurtured in hell.

They bring venom, and poison, and snakes, and scorpions, and ... give him to eat. And until the resurrection of the dead and the final body, he is in much torment and punishment of kinds worthy of hell; [S] 194 and especially that the food there can be only like putrid blood." Ch. 2, §§ 187 - 194 p. 137).

In the much later Chapter 21, hell is definitely only a place in which various types of punishments are inflicted upon various types of 'sinners', but milder and different in kind from the *Arda Viraf Namah*.

"The Sage asked the Spirit of Wisdom thus: What is the end of the world-adorning and spirit-destroying man? and what is the end of him who is a scoffing man? and what is the end of him who is an idle man, ... a malicious man ... a lazy man ... a false-hearted man ... an arrogant man?" (Ch. 21; §§ 1 - 8, p. 153).

And in the reply given (purportedly) by the Spirit of Wisdom, we sometimes see (here also) a distorted form of the Gathas' law of consequences, in that sometimes the type of punishment is related to the type of wrongful conduct being punished. For example, the "scoffing man" who "makes a mockery of the good, and praises the bad," is consigned

"to the scoffing demoness, and that demoness performs upon him every single punishment *with* a ridicule and a mockery." (Ch. 21.11 - 17, pp. 153 - 154).

This same idea (that some punishments are related to the types of wrongdoings committed), appears in a few chapters of the *Arda Viraf Namah* (illustrated above), but with torments that are not at all so mild as a "scoffing demoness," who mocks and ridicules.

Returning to the *Mainyo-i-khard*, most of the 'punishments' for the other types of 'evil' persons in Ch. 21 seem to be in this life - in the material existence - rather than in an afterlife, except for the arrogant man (mentioned below), the scoffing man (mentioned above) and with one other exception that is not clear to me (which I have footnoted).³⁸ For example:

The "lazy man" finds himself in want, because "Hormezd produces no corn for him who is a lazy man..."; and the "gifts and charity", the "lodging and entertainment" which should be given to those in need, are not to be given to a lazy man (§§ 27 - 33, p. 154). So here the 'punishment' is in this (material) life.

For the "false-hearted man," his "worship and invocation" are "little approve[d]", the gains he seeks (through being false-hearted) are "but little" given to him, his reputation "in the mouths of the good" is always infamous (§§ 34 - 38, p. 154). So in effect, in this (material) life, he does not reap any hoped for benefits from being false-hearted (presumably long term, although this text does not say so).

The "arrogant man" has few friends, and many enemies. And the "gifts also which he gives to anyone", and his worship is "little approve[d]", and the gain which he seeks is "but little" because of his arrogance ~ once again, all indications of what happens in this life.

But for the arrogant man there is also a punishment in the afterlife ~ in hell [*dôzhakh* 'bad existence'], which here is a place ~ "they consign him to the demoness of arrogance," who "performs punishment of various kinds upon him, and is not pacified." §§ 40 - 44; Pazand part p. 28; English part p. 154.

To summarize: In the *Mainyo-ikhard*, we see in some instances that 'hell' is a wrongheaded state of being in mortal existence. And we see echos of some metaphors from the Gathas and from some YAv. texts,. But mostly, 'hell' is perceived as a place of (comparatively mild) punishment ~ sometimes in this life, and sometimes in an afterlife (with a few repetitions from YAv. Fragments). I think its inconsistencies reflect different schools of thought, expressed in different texts (or fragments), which were added to, and included with, the original *Mainyo-ikhard* text, when it was copied and re-copied down through the centuries.

Heaven.

In the *Mainyo-ikhard*, the Sage who is asking the questions, clearly thinks that 'heaven' is a place. But in the answers of the Spirit of Wisdom, 'heaven' is sometimes a state of being, and sometimes a place. In recording these answers, did the author understand that 'heaven' was a state of being? His questions suggest that he did not. So then did his answers (given through the Spirit of Wisdom) use more ancient descriptions handed down in the tradition, from Avestan times in which 'heaven' is a state of being, ~ but without understanding them? I do not know. Here are some quotations. You can decide for yourself. These all are from Chapter 7, and I give the sections in numerical order, so you can see how the text alternates between heaven as a state of being and as a place.

The questions: *A place*

"The Sage asked the Spirit of Wisdom thus: How is heaven [*vahesht*] and how many? and how are the *Hamestaga*,³⁹ and how many? and how is hell, and how many? And the lot of the pious [*ashôâ* 'truthful'] in heaven is what? and *their* well-being is whence? And the torment and misery of the wicked in hell is what? And the lot of those who are *Hamestaga* is what and how?" Ch. 7 §§ 1 - 7, English part p. 140; Pazand part p. 15.

The answers: *A state of being?*

"The Spirit of Wisdom answered thus:

Heaven is first, **from** the star track **unto** the moon track; and second, **from** the moon track **unto** the sun; and third, **from** the sun track **unto** Garothman [GAv. *garō dāmāna-* 'house of song'], that the creator Hormezd resides in.

And heaven (*vahesht* 'most good existence') is first Humat (good thoughts), and second Hukht (good words), and third Hvaresht (good deeds)." Ch. 7 §§ 8 - 12, p. 140.

The 'most good existence' (*vahesht* 'heaven') of good thoughts, words and actions, are not a physical place. These ways of thinking, speaking and acting reflect a state of being ~ a conclusion that is corroborated in the Gathas and in so many YAv. texts in which *ahu- vahišta-* the 'most good

existence' (most often described as truth possessing, light-filled, all happy) is a term for heaven or paradise.

In fact, in the Gathas, each time we think a good thought, say a good word, or do a good deed, we bring the Divine to life in that instance,⁴⁰ ~ 'goodness' being equated with the true (good, right) order of existence (*aša-*), which the Divine personifies. And what are good thoughts, good words, and good actions, if not the true (wholly good) order of existence embodied in thought, word and action (*ārmaiti-*) ~ a quality of the Divine?

But (returning to this Pazand text) what should we make of the descriptions of "heaven" (sg.) as from the star track to the moon track to the sun track to the house of song? Are these physical locations? I don't think they are.

In the *Arda Viraf Namah*, these three "tracks" of light are specifically tied to the 'heavens' of good thought, good word, and good deeds (although without any understanding of their metaphoric significance).

I think these three types of light ~ "from" starlight, "unto" moonlight, "unto" sunlight, "unto" the house of song (in which Wisdom resides), were intended to reflect a metaphoric progression in enlightenment, that parallels the 'most good existence (*vahesht*)' of good thoughts, good words and good actions and I offer the following evidence in support of my conclusion.

In the Gathas and later Avestan texts, light is repeatedly used as a metaphor for Wisdom and His attributes (*amesha spenta*), which are the true (good, right) order of existence ~ a most good existence (*aša- vahišta-*, *ahu- vahišta-*), and the most dazzling form of light ~ the sun ~ is used as a simile for Wisdom (*mazdā-*), truth, and its (human!) comprehension, good thinking.⁴¹

In the Pazand *Mainyo-i-Khard*, the descriptions of heaven (sg.) as "from" the star track, to the moon track, to the sun track, to the House of Song are in the verses that immediately precede the description of heaven (sg.) as good thoughts, good words, good deeds (but without any 'footsteps').

The much earlier YAv. *Farvardin Yasht*, speaks of the fravashi's path of the stars, moon, sun, and endless lights,⁴² ~ the last being a much used term for paradise in YAv. and Pahlavi texts. The fravashi is the Divine within.⁴³ In the Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, the Divine is called 'endless light'.⁴⁴ And in the Gathas, 'paradise' is equated with the Divine.⁴⁵

I am inclined to think, therefore, that the *Mainyo-i-Khard* was recording a much earlier teaching in which the first set of descriptions (the tracks of starlight, moonlight, and sunlight) were intended as a rather lovely metaphoric parallel to the second set (good thoughts, words and deeds), indicating a progression in enlightenment.

Since 'track' is the same in meaning as 'path', we see in the starlight path of good thoughts, the moonlight path of good words, and the sunlight path of good deeds, a sort of stylized, metaphoric model of the Gathas' idea of an incremental paradise which starts in this (mortal) existence and consists of the true (good, right) order of existence, its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule ~ all qualities of the Divine (*amesha spenta*) ~ and progresses until these qualities are attained completely, at which time the reason for mortality ceases to exist, and a non-mortal state (*non-deathness amərətāt-*) is attained.

Was the original author of (this part of) the *Mainyo-i-khard* aware of this idea, or was he just conveying what to him was a poetic description that had been passed down from earlier ages? I think he was. But in either event, the underlying idea of the incremental path (the 3 tracks) and the metaphors of light are pure Zarathushtra. So I think this description arose either during Zarathushtra's time, or close to it; or if it arose later, it was crafted by a teacher of the religion who understood well, Zarathushtra's ideas and metaphors.

It is not without interest that the word 'empyrean' is a synonym for paradise, and is defined in the dictionary as "1 a: the highest heaven or heavenly sphere in ancient and medieval cosmology usually consisting of fire or light; b: the true and ultimate heavenly paradise..."⁴⁶ The date of the Gathas, and YAv. texts,⁴⁷ originated long, long before medieval times (the latter spanning a period from roughly 500 to 1500 C.E.),⁴⁸ but I do not know whether these ideas of medieval cosmology were derived from Zarathushtra's thought, or occurred independently, or were derived from other sources.

More answers (purportedly by the Spirit of Wisdom) to the original questions:

A state of being in a place ?

"The pious [*ashôā* 'truthful'] in heaven are undecaying, and immortal ('*amarg*'); [*Av. amərətāt* 'non-deathness'], and undistressed, and unalarmed, and unafflicted;

and everywhere [ft. 3 "Or 'at all times' ..."], they are full of splendor, and sweet-scented, and joyful, and full of happiness and full of goodness;

and *at* all times, a sweet-scented breeze, and a fragrance that is like sweet-basil comes forth, which is more pleasant than every pleasure, and more fragrant than every fragrance.

And from the existence that is in heaven, *there* is no satiety for them.

And their sitting, and walking, and perception, and enjoyment *are* with the Yazads, and Ameshaspends and the pious [*ashôā* 'truthful'], for ever and everlasting." Ch. 7 §§ 15 - 17, English part pp. 140 - 141; Pazand words from the Pazand part p. 16.

The "Ameshaspends" (*Av. amesha spenta*) in this Pazand text are entities (so also in many YAv. texts). In the Gathas, the amesha spenta are most often concepts and characteristics of the Divine, some of which also exist in man; and (much less frequently) some of them are treated as allegorical entities.⁴⁹

To summarize: Absent from the Pazand *Mainyo-i-khard* are the cruelties we see in the *Arda Viraf Namah*. But this Pazand text (*Mainyo-i-khard*) also seems to record separate (sometimes inconsistent) strands of traditional beliefs. We see some echoes of an earlier belief (as in the Gathas and some YAv. texts) in which 'heaven' is a state of being (comprising thoughts, words, and actions), and a later belief (as in some YAv. texts) by which time 'heaven' had become a place.⁵⁰ But, as the Pahlavi Fragment (discussed below) shows, even in Pahlavi times, the ideas of the Gathas regarding 'heaven' were remembered and taught.

The Tale of Gosht-i Fryano,

In a Pahlavi story *The Tale of Gosht-i Fryano*, we see an echo of the idea from the Gathas (and some later Avestan texts), that the most-good existence (*ahu- vahišta-* a terms for 'heaven') commences in mortal existence (indicating a strand of older, traditional knowledge), but with an understanding that is far removed from the thought of the Gathas.

The Tale of Gosht-i Fryano, has been translated by E. W. West, and appears in the Appendix to Haug & West, *The Book of Arda Viraf*. The following quotations are from Ch. 2, §§ 1 - 6, page references are: for Pahlavi words on pp. 211 - 212; for English words on p. 251).

Although this story is in Pahlavi, it probably was a version of an earlier, well known, Avestan story (the original of which has not survived) because the Pahlavi individual Gosht-i Fryano is a well known character in YAv. texts, where he is known as Yoishta of the Frayanas (*Yoishtô yô Fryananum*) in the YAv. *Aban Yasht* and in the *Farvardin Yasht*, as E. W. West tells us (p. 249 and ft. 1). However, this Pahlavi story is not in those YAv. texts.

In the Pahlavi story Akht the sorcerer went to the city of "Enigma-expounders", and challenged one and all to answer certain "enigmas" (riddles) under threat of being killed and the city turned into "a beaten track for elephants" (destroyed). The challenge was taken up by Gosht. The first riddle asked was,

"Is the paradise [*Vahishto*] in the world good, or that which is in heaven [*minavad*]?",

to which Gosht, after an exchange of courtesies ("May'st thou be in misery whilst living, felon and wicked tyrant! and fall to hell when dead...") replied

"the paradise [*vahisht-i*] which is in the world, is better than that which is in heaven [*minavad*]"

giving as one of the reasons for his opinion that "...if thou shalt do, in the world, anything which is not virtuous, then thou comest not through it to the good paradise."

It is clear from both this question and the answer given, that both Akht the sorcerer and Gosht believed and understood that the paradise of the 'most-good existence' (*vahisht*) exists in this life and in an afterlife. Those who have read the chapters in *Part One: Zarathushtra's Paradise In This World & The Next*, and in *Part Two: The Houses Of Paradise & Hell*, may have thought that I was being fanciful in my opinion that in the Gathas, 'paradise' (the 'most good existence *vahišta- ahu-*) exists in mortal existence (sporadically) and eventually in a non-mortal existence (completely). But that conclusion is corroborated not only in certain YAv. texts, but also here in this Pahlavi story.

If you are puzzled by West's translations of *vahisht* as 'paradise' and *minavad* as 'heaven', the following may be helpful. The Pahlavi word *vahisht* ~ became a short-hand version of Av. *vahišta- ahu-* 'most good existence' (one of the terms used in the Gathas and in many YAv. texts for the good reward in mortal and non-mortal existence). Now in the Pahlavi *Arda Viraf Namah*, the word *vahisht* is used only for 'paradise' (as a place) in an afterlife, and many centuries later, the Pahlavi *vahisht* became the Persian *behesht* 'paradise' (also only a place in an afterlife) ~ hence West's translation of *vahisht* as 'paradise'. The Pahlavi word that West translates as *minavad* is related to Av. *mainyu-* which in the Gathas is used for a way of being (an intangible concept) for both mortals and the Divine, and a way of being that can be 'harmful' as well as 'beneficial', and 'most beneficial', but which by Pahlavi times came to be used only for the good spiritual existence (*mino*) in the afterlife, as opposed to the material existence (*getig*) in this life.⁵¹

The Bundahishn.

All references to the *Bundahishn* are to E. W. West's translation in Chapter 30 of SBE 5. All page references are to this Chapter.

As this Pahlavi text itself states, its actual name is *Zand-akas* 'knowing the tradition'.⁵² It is essentially a benign text (although locked into the cultural perceptions of its time), which, with endearing faithfulness, attempted to record all surviving traditional knowledge ~ some of which echoes the Gathas, and a great deal of which does not. Its notions of 'heaven' and 'hell' are all in an afterlife ~ 'heaven' being the eventual, all good, non-mortal existence following an end of times sequence of events. I get the impression that, confronted with inconsistent ideas in the tradition, it attempted to provide a framework in order to integrate and reconcile (unsuccessfully) these different, conflicting, strands of tradition. In so doing, it gives us a rather confusing (and illogical) sequence of events. It is sometimes difficult to know who the "they" in various sections may be. And some sections are obscure to me (and also to West), some of which I have footnoted.

First, according to this text, after the arrival of (presumably) the last millennial messiah ~ here called Soshyans ~ there is a general resurrection of the dead (presumably after everyone has died), all of whom once again assume bodily form, which takes a period of 57 years (§§ 4 - 8, pp. 121 - 123). The next section (§ 9) is obscure to me, I footnote it here.⁵³ Continuing with § 10.

"Then is the assembly of the Sadvastaran, where all mankind will stand at this time; in that assembly everyone sees his own good deeds and his own evil deeds ..." § 10, p. 123;

Afterwards, they set the righteous *man* apart from the wicked; *and* then the righteous is for heaven (garodman), and they cast the wicked back⁵⁴ to hell. Three days *and* nights they inflict punishment bodily in hell, *and* then he beholds bodily those three days' happiness in heaven [?]." §§ 12 - 13, p. 124; §§ 14 - 16 are footnoted.⁵⁵

The sections that follow, say that among "his" [Soshyans'?] "producers of the renovation" fifteen men and fifteen damsels will come to the assistance of Soshyans (§ 17). How they assist, it does not say.

The text then speaks of "Gochihar" (which West thinks is a meteor ft. 2, p. 125) which will fall to earth, and melt all the metal in it, so that it will become molten, and that all men will pass through this molten metal, and so be made 'pure'.

"As Gochihar falls in the *celestial* sphere from a moonbeam on to the earth, the distress of the earth becomes such-like as *that of* a sheep when a wolf falls *upon it*. Afterwards, the fire and halo melt the metal of Shatvairo, in the hills *and* mountains, *and* it remains on this earth like a river." §§ 18 ~ 19, p. 125;

"Then all men will pass into that melted metal and will become pure; when one is righteous, then it seems to him just as though he walks continually in warm milk; *but* when wicked, then it seems to him in such manner as though, in the world, he walks continually in melted metal." § 20, p. 126;

"Afterwards, with the greatest affection, all men come together, ... All men become of one voice *and* administer loud praise to Auharmazd and the archangels. ... §§ 21, 23 p. 126;

§§ 24 - 28 are either obscure, or record events which are inconsistent with what is said in preceding sections.⁵⁶

§§ 29 ~ 30 recount the beginning of the end for evil. Auharmazd and each of the amesha spenta (which here are living beings) seize on (ft. or 'smite') their respective opposites: Auharmazd smites the evil spirit; Vohuman (Av. *vohu- manah-* 'good thinking') smites Akoman (Av. *aka- manah-* 'bad thinking'), etc.; "true-speaking [smites] what is evil-speaking; Srosh ['listening to the Word' smites] Aeshm [anger]." p. 128; then evil "runs back to gloom *and* darkness".

§§ 31 ~ 32 recount the final destruction of evil and of 'hell' (which in this text has become only a place).

"Gochihar [the meteor] burns the serpent (mar) in the melted metal *and* the stench and pollution *which* were in hell are burned in that metal, *and* it (hell) becomes quite pure." §31, p. 129;

"He (Auharmazd) sets the vault into which the evil spirit fled, in that metal; he brings the land of 'hell' back for the enlargement of the world; the renovation arises in the universe by *his* will, *and* the world is immortal for ever *and* everlasting." § 32, p. 129.⁵⁷

So in this text, we see various threads and designs that appear in the Gathas, but in a tapestry of later pictures. The Gatha idea of self-judgment.⁵⁸ The molten metal which in the Gathas is a metaphor for the transformational process of the refiner's fire which we experience in this life ~ through earned and unearned adversities ~ as part of Zarathushtra's core idea that a good end is certain for all, that evil will eventually be eliminated, and good will prevail,⁵⁹ although in the Gathas, this process does not occur at a final judgment, as in the *Bundahishn*. And the *Bundahishn* records (although in a different way) another foundational idea in the Gathas and other YAv texts ~ that the way to defeat 'evil' is through 'good'.⁶⁰

And of course, as you can see, there are many strands of tradition in this text that are alien to the teachings of the Gathas ~ the biggest being that 'hell' is a place of punishment in an end of times event, whereas in the Gathas, 'hell' is a mistaken, wrongheaded, untruthful, unenlightened state of being in mortal existence.

In short, in *all* Avestan and Pahlavi texts ~ without exception ~ the 'end' for everyone, is an all good, non-mortal existence which is assured, certain, as Zaehner confirms ~ Pahlavi *frashkard/frashgard*, (YAv. *frašō.kərāiti*).⁶¹ In that respect at least, the 'end' in all Zoroastrian texts reflects the more ancient teaching of the Gathas.

But (unlike the Pahlavi *Selections of Zadsparam*), there is no hint in the *Bundahishn* of Zarathushtra's profound idea of how the good end is brought about ~ through the law of consequences, and mutual, loving help, as part of an on-going learning process that brings about a spiritual evolution in which our evil preferences are eliminated. Thus evil is ultimately overcome, in all the living.⁶²

One final point. It is interesting that although in the *Bundahishn* 'hell' is clearly a place in Ch. 30, it also seems to record a transition in thinking in which 'hell' is both a horrible place and an unhappy state of being in which the soul thinks it is alone. The following quotation (about this 'hell' of being alone) is not in Chapter 30. It appears in in Ch. 28, sandwiched between a discussion of demons (all of whom have the names of human vices), and astrology. So apparently, the author was just recording it as a bit of miscellaneous traditional knowledge, the significance of which he may not (or may) have understood. I have omitted the string of Pahlavi adjectives describing 'hell' which E. W. West shows in round parentheses.

"Regarding the cold, dry, stony, and dark interior of mysterious (...) hell it says, that the darkness is fit to grasp with the hand, and the stench is fit to cut with a knife; and if they inflict the punishment of a thousand men within a single span,⁶³ they think in this way, that they are alone; and the loneliness is worse than its punishment...", Ch. 28, § 47, p. 114.

I think these words record a much earlier teaching in which 'darkness' and 'aleness' were used metaphorically, indicating that the 'bad existence' which is 'hell' is an ignorant (dark) state of being that perceives itself as isolated.⁶⁴

This perception of total aleness is 'hell', not only in terms of the unhappiness it generates, but also as a deceived way of thinking, in that it lacks the understanding of the unity of all the living, that is implicit in the Gatha concept of completeness at the collective level (*haurvatāt*).⁶⁵

A Pahlavi Fragment.

There is a Pahlavi Fragment, (which touches me deeply). All references to it here, are to the translation by E. W. West.⁶⁶ Its language and some of its ideas are a bit culture bound, and not quite those of Zarathushtra, but it uses the framework of the amesha spenta to teach a way of life and worship that (in its underlying ideas) echoes what we see in the Gathas.⁶⁷ And its idea of 'heaven' is pure Zarathushtra.

By the time this Fragment text was written, the amesha spenta (qualities of the Divine in the Gathas) had become living entities which were 'worshipped' as 'deities'. And whereas in the Gathas, various qualities of the divine (amesha spenta) were linked with material metaphors in multi-dimensioned ways,⁶⁸ in the later texts, each material thing was thought to be under the care and protection of a specific amesha spenta with which it was linked, as the following Table shows (in the Gathas, there is no segregation of genders as shown here):

The Divine		The Material
Auharmazd (Av. <i>ahura- mazdā</i> - 'Lord, Wisdom')	with	the righteous man
Ardavahisht (Av. <i>aša- vahišta</i> 'most good truth')	with	fire
Vohuman (Av. <i>vohu- manah</i> - 'good thinking')	with	cattle
Spendarmad (Av. <i>spānta- ārmaiti</i> - 'beneficial embodied truth')	with	earth and the virtuous woman
Shatvairo (Av. <i>xšaθra- vairya</i> - 'the rule to be chosen')	with	metals
Horvadam (Av. <i>haurvatāt</i> - 'completeness')	with	water
Amerodad (Av. <i>amərətāt</i> - 'non-deathness')	with	plants

This Pahlavi Fragment text tells of a (supposed) conversation between "Zaratusht" and "Auharmazd" about the amesha spenta, how to "propitiate" each of them, and the reward for so doing.

In the Gathas, the qualities of the Divine (amesha spenta) are both objects of worship and the way to worship ~ the true (correct, good) order of existence, its good comprehension, its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action, its good rule, its complete attainment and resulting non-deathness.

In this Pahlavi Fragment, we see echoes of the foregoing Gatha ideas, but framed in the perceptions of Pahlavi times. Here, the amesha spenta (now thought of as spiritual entities) are the objects of worship ~ propitiation. And the way to "propitiate" them in this Fragment text, is described ~ not as rituals, but as promoting the things under the care of a given amesha spenta, thus turning worship into a way of living that cares for each aspect of the material existence that is linked to each amesha spenta. Which, if you can look past the culture bound ways of thinking and speaking, in some ways is rather lovely, but in other ways, a bit limited.

And this Gatha way of worshipping is also echoed in one of the *Bundahishn* manuscripts which states, "The propitiation of the creator Auharmazd [Av. Ahura Mazda], the radiant, glorious, omniscient, wise, powerful and supreme, by what is well-thought, well-said, and well-done in thought, word, and deed,..." E. W. West translation.⁶⁹

Here (from our Pahlavi Fragment) are some excerpts which demonstrate this type of worship and its reward which starts in this life, and culminates in a quality of existence ~ vahisht, 'heaven' (Av. *vahišta- ahu-*) which in this Fragment is equated with the splendor of the Divine (as it is in the Gathas).⁷⁰ In the quotations below, West adds the word *in* (in *italics*) before 'heaven' (indicating that *in* is not in the Pahlavi text), because in West's mind-set, 'heaven' was a place. Also, there is no article 'the' in Pahlavi. So when you read these quotations, disregard *in* and '*in the*' ~ and you will see what this Pahlavi teacher thought 'heaven' to be.

Auharmazd: (Av. Ahura Mazda)

"Whoever wishes to propitiate Auharmazd in the world, wishes to promote the things of Auharmazd; ... it is necessary *that* he should propitiate the righteous man ... and should act for his happiness and afford him protection from the vile..." (§§ 7 - 8, pp. 373 - 374).

And the reward for so doing?

"... his fame and welfare exist a long time in the world, and the splendour of Auharmazd and pleasure and joy become his own *in* heaven (vahisht)." (p. 374).

Vohuman: (Av. *vohu- manah* 'good thinking')

"Whoever wishes to propitiate Vohuman in the world, *and* wishes to act for *his* happiness is *he* who wishes to promote the things of Vohuman; ... *that* he should propitiate, ... the well-yielding (hudhak) cattle, ... and should act for *their* happiness ... He should not give *them* as a bribe to a man who is a wicked tyrant, *but* should keep *them* in a pleasant and warm locality ... and he should not drive them apart from *their* young, and should not put the young apart from their milk..." (§§ 9 - 10, p. 374).

And the reward for so doing?

"... his fame subsists in the world, and the splendour of Auharmazd becomes his own *in the* best existence [Av. *ahu- vahišta-*]." (§ 11, pp. 374 - 375).

Ardavahisht: (Av. *aša- vahišta-* 'the true (correct, good) order of existence')

"Whoever wishes to propitiate Ardavahisht in the world is *he* who wishes to promote his things; ... *that* he should propitiate the fire of Auharmazd, ... and should act for *its* happiness; he should not put upon *it* wood, incense, and holy-water which are stolen and extorted, and he should not cook at it a ration (bahar) which is violently extorted from men..." (§ 12, p. 375).

And the reward for so doing?

"... his fame subsists in the world,
and the splendour of Auharmazd becomes his own *in* heaven [vahisht]." (§ 13, p. 375).

Shatvairo: (Av. *x šaθra- vairyā-* 'the rule to be chosen')

"Whoever wishes to propitiate Shatvairo in the world and wishes to act for *his* happiness, is *he* who wishes to promote the things of Shatvairo; ... it is necessary ... *that* he should propitiate melted metal at every place and time. And the propitiation of melted metal is this that he shall practise the habits (aiyino) of the heart so unsullied and pure that, when they shall drop melted metal upon *it*, it does not burn ... and one should not commit sin with metal, ... and should not give gold and silver to the vile." (§§ 14 - 18, pp. 375 - 376).

And the reward for so doing?

"... his fame subsists in the world,
and the splendour of Auharmazd becomes his own *in* heaven [vahisht]." (§ 19, p. 376).

Spendarmad: (Av. *spənta- ārmaiti-* 'beneficial embodied truth')

"Whoever wishes to propitiate Spendarmad in the world, wishes to promote the things of Spendarmad; ... it is necessary ... *that* he should propitiate, and every place and time, the earth and virtuous woman, ... *and* should act for *their* happiness ... On account of the lodgment of Spendarmad in the earth, when a robber, violent and worthy of death, and wives who are disrespectful to *their* husbands walk about in sinfulness in the world and their husbands are active and virtuous,⁷¹ it [the earth] becomes much distressed ... and her [Spendarmad's] happiness arises from that place when they shall perform tillage and cultivation on it, and a virtuous son is born upon it, and they rear cattle upon it;" (§§ 20 - 24, pp. 376 - 377).

And the reward for so doing?

"... his fame subsists in the world,
and the splendour of Auharmazd becomes one's own *in* heaven [vahisht]." (§ 24, p. 377).

Horvadad and Amerodad: (Av. *haurvatāt- amərətāt-* 'completeness, non-deathness')

"Whoever wishes to propitiate Horvadad and Amerodad in the world, whereas that is necessary which promotes their things, ... he should propitiate at every place and time, the water and vegetation of Horvadad and Amerodad ... he should not act oppressively, he should not walk the world in sinfulness, and should not ... bring ... pollution to water; he should not destroy vegetation unlawfully, and should not give fruit to the idle and vile..." (§§ 25 - 26, pp. 377 - 378).

And the reward for so doing?

"... his fame subsists in the world,
and the splendour of Auharmazd becomes his *in* heaven [vahisht]."

And this Fragment text concludes with the following:

[Auharmazd (purportedly) speaking]: "... and do thou, too, speak thus unto men, so that they may commit no sin and may not become wicked, and the splendour of Auharmazd may become their own *in* heaven [vahišt]."

Completed in peace, pleasure, and joy." (§§ 30 - 31, p. 379).

How beautiful is that ?!

One of the meanings of 'splendor' is brilliant light, and 'light' in various forms is used in many Avestan and Pahlavi texts as a metaphor for the true (correct, good) order of existence ~ which is the existence of the Divine.

You can see that with the insertion by West of the word "*in*" (which is not in the Pahlavi text), 'heaven' becomes a place (reflecting West's mind-set). Without it, heaven becomes a state of being - the splendor of the Divine (an enlightened existence) the person's own most-good existence. The Av. *ahu- vahišta*, Pahlavi *vahesht/vahišt*, Persian *behesht* are all terms for 'heaven'.

And as you can see, this notion of 'heaven' as a state of being that is Divine, was a clear, strong belief (repeated many times) of the Pahlavi teacher who authored the original text which became this (copied and re-copied) surviving Fragment. So it is puzzling that other parts of this surviving Fragment seem to speak of 'heaven' as a place.⁷² I am inclined to think that these 'embroideries' may have been the additions of later scribes who copied and re-copied this text ~ only a Fragment of which has survived.

In conclusion: The evidence does not support the idea ~ repeated unthinkingly so often by so many ~ that Zarathushtra invented the idea of 'hell'. There is no 'hell' in the Gathas (or later Av. texts) other than a wrongheaded, ignorant, deceived, way of being in mortal existence, and the sorrow and grief this way of being generates, for itself and for others; but a way of being which, through the refiner's fire ~ the earned and unearned experiences (including mutual loving help) that sculpt our souls ~ will incrementally change, and eventually become the splendor of Wisdom's own existence ~ goodness in the superlative degree, *vahišta*-.

* * * * *

¹ In describing a punitive hell of tortures, the Pahlavi texts may have invented the idea, or they may have got it from the doctrines of Christianity and/or Islam ~ both of which have the idea of a punitive hell of torment. All surviving Pahlavi texts were written two or more centuries after the Arab invasion (which occurred around 647 CE), and therefore would have been written some centuries after both Christianity and Islam were well established, thriving religions.

The Sasanians. Because of the burning of texts which occurred after the Arab invasion, we do not know whether the Sasanian religious establishment promoted the doctrine of a hell of torment in an afterlife. We do know that in surviving (post Arab invasion) Pahlavi texts, the idea of a punitive hell of torments did not include being burned alive by fire ~ although in the *Bundahishn* there is the idea of being purified by 'molten metal', an idea we see in the Gathas (detailed in *Part Two: Molten, Glowing Metal*).

Christianity. I do not know when a punitive fiery 'hell' of torment in an afterlife first came into Christian theology. It does not appear in the Gospels of the New Testament authored by the disciples of Christ who attempted to record his life and teachings. If the 'hell' of Christianity was invented before the 800s CE, then

the Pahlavi writers may have derived their idea of a punitive hell of torments (even though not fiery) from Christianity. Or the Pahlavi idea may have arisen independently.

Islam. A punitive fiery hell of torment in the afterlife is described in the Quran (according to a quotation from the Quran by Esposito *Islam, The Straight Path*, (Oxford Univ. Press 1991) p. 32). If this is accurate, then Zoroastrian priests who wrote the Pahlavi texts would have been familiar with this idea of a fiery hell of torments in the dominant religion (Islam) under which they lived, and may have derived the idea from Islam.

² This is one of the Pahlavi Fragments which E. W. West states has been appended to *Shayast La Shayast*, but is not a part of it. SBE 5, p. 372, ft. 1.

³ SBE Vol. 5, p. 385. I do not know what Pahlavi word West translated as "hell" in this section. It may have been 'dushahu' which means a 'bad existence', because this Pahlavi Fragment reflects some ideas that are close to the Gathas in describing the 'good' reward as a good state of being that is Divine, and some ideas that are not ~ such as going to hell for failure to submit to priestly control (as quoted in the main part of this chapter).

⁴ Kent 1950, p. 7.

⁵ In *An Introduction to the Gathas*, 1989 - 1990, which I edited and published, I took a different view in pamphlet # 10, July 1990 which (unfortunately) was inaccurate, in that it did not show that Vedic, Avestan and Old Persian all derived from a common ancestral language. It is a well established fact that they did (detailed in *Part Four: Ancient Origins & Homelands*).

⁶ Zarathushtra's ideas are 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*; *The Houses of Paradise & Hell*; and *The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*.

The later Avestan texts' ideas are detailed in *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*, and *The Absence of Damnation & Hell in Other Avestan Texts*. The latter chapter also discusses texts written in grammatically faulty YAv. indicating that they were written after YAv. times when the priests were no longer fluent in Avestan, in which we see small beginnings of the idea of a bad existence/place for wrongdoers in an afterlife.

⁷ E. W. West's 1871, *The Book of Mainyo-ikhard*, a Pazand text. The pagination in this book is a bit awkward in that the Pazand section, its English translation, and the "Glossary and Index" ~ each starts again with page 1. In his translation, the word which he translates as 'hell' is *dôzhakh*, Ch. 7, § 20, Pazand section p. 16. In his Glossary and Index he links *dôzhakh* to Avestan "*dushahû*" [*duš.ahu*] which means 'bad existence' (p. 63). The Av. prefix *duš-/duž-* means 'bad' ~ for example in the Gatha verse Y49.11 we have the words (given here in stem form) *duš.x šaθra-* 'bad rule', *duš.x šyaoθana-* 'bad actions', *dužvacah-* 'bad word', *duždaēnā-* 'bad envisionment', *dužmanah-* 'bad thinking' or 'bad thought' etc. So the Avestan *duš.ahu-* would indeed be 'bad existence', as West states.

⁸ West commenting in his translation of the Pazand *Mainyo-ikhard*, footnotes that the 'best existence' (Pahl. 'pāhlūm ahvân') is the Pahlavi form of Av. vahisstem ahūm from which the [Pazand] term vahisht (Pers. 'bahisht') is also derived, SBE Vol. 5, ft. 1 p. 375, and pp. 294 - 295, ft. 3).

⁹ In Y28.5, Zarathushtra says,

- a. Truth, will I see you, (as I continue) acquiring both good thinking
- b. and the way to the Lord, -- listening to wisdom/Wisdom, most rich in strength?
- c. Through His Word, by (giving) tongue (to it), we would turn (around) in the greatest way, those whose reasoning is paralysed.' Y28.5.

This verse is discussed in detail in *Part Six: Yasna 28.5*.

¹⁰ Detailed in *Part Four: The Vendidad And Its Lessons for Today*.

¹¹ Haug & West 1872 *The Book of Arda Viraf* (BiblioLife reprint). Haug & West believe that this text may have originally been written during Sasanian times, (p. 157). I respectfully disagree for the following reasons.

We know that the *Arda Viraf Namah* was written after the Arab invasion, because it mentions the Pahlavi text *Dinkard* (p. 144). And the *Dinkard* was written after the Arab invasion of Iran (Shaked (1979), *Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, Preface p. ix). So the *Arda Viraf Namah* could not have been written during Sasanian times (before the Arab invasion). Whether the ideas it contains originated during Sasanian times, I cannot say, because so far as I am aware, no Sasanian texts have survived (only some stone inscriptions).

But I do not think the idea of 'hell' as a place of punitive torment (as detailed in the *Arda Viraf Namah*) could have originated during Sasanian times, because during those times, there would have been no need to control human behavior through the fear of a hell of torments in an afterlife. During Sasanian times, the authority of the religious establishment was backed by the sovereign, and various authoritarian high priests (such as Tansar and the infamous Kirdir) had no trouble at all in mandating beliefs (often wrong, but seldom in doubt).

By contrast, after the Arab invasion, the Zoroastrian religious establishment was not backed by any secular authority. Loss of knowledge, persecution, competing religious pressures, and disbelief among members of the community in many of the rules mandated by the Zoroastrian religious establishment, was so pervasive that the religious establishment had to resort to resort to control through fear. That is why (in my opinion) the expedient of a drug induced journey to the world of the spirits was thought of ~ not just to cloak priestly mandates with the authority of the 'spirits', but to establish that the good (read obedient) were rewarded in 'heaven' after life, and the 'bad' (read doubting and disobedient) were punished in a hell of torments, ~ as the *Arda Viraf Namah* details.

¹² On 'reason' (*x ratu-*) in the Gathas: Insler 1975 translates *x ratu-* as 'will, determination, intention'. But I find the opinions of H. P. Schmidt and others ~ that *x ratu-* means reason/reasoning etc. ~ more persuasive (discussed in *Part Three: Xratu*). In Zarathushtra's thought, the teachings of Wisdom, the path of truth, are based on 'reason' *x ratu-*:

He asks Wisdom for teachings that will satisfy reason, '[... O Wisdom, I ask for all \(that\) through which you may satisfy the reasoning \[*x ratūm*\] of good thinking, and the soul of the cow.](#)' Y28.1; my translation (the 'cow' is an allegory for the beneficial in mortal existence, see *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Cow & Its Network*).

He describes the beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) which is Wisdom's way of being, as having '[great reasoning \[*aš.x ratuš*\]](#),' Y31.9, my translation.

He calls Wisdom the Giver of reason '[... May the Giver of reason \[*x ratāuš*\] instruct through good thinking \(the course of\) my direction \(so as\) to be \(the\) charioteer of \(my\) tongue.](#)' Y50.6, my translation.

¹³ On Zarathushtra's disapproval of mind-altering drugs, "[When, Wise One, shall men desist from murdering? When shall they fear the folly of that intoxicating drink, through the effects of which the Karpans as well as the evil rulers of the lands torture our \(good\) intentions in an evil way?](#)" Y48.10, Insler 1975.

¹⁴ The *Arda Viraf Namah*'s views on this issue are quoted in more detail in *Part Four: Loss of Knowledge Before & After Alexander*.

¹⁵ Haug & West 1872, pp. 144 - 147, and the translators' extensive footnotes.

¹⁶ One begins to understand the doubt and disbelief that existed in the community, when one reads much of the Pahlavi *Dinkard*, and other Pahlavi texts such as *Shyast La-Shyast*, which, using the Vendidad as authority, starts off with a list of 'sins' and the gives the money equivalent for each 'sin'. This attitude of the priestly establishment on an enormous number of senseless and petty 'sins' which are not intrinsically 'wrong', (and

which tried to control minute and detailed aspects of everyday life), pervades the Pahlavi texts ~ with some rare and beautiful exceptions, which I have mentioned in many chapters of this book.

¹⁷ The Indo-Europeans were ancestors of the Indo-Iranians, which in turn was an ancestral tribe of people in India and Iran. Haug & West footnote a parallel in India (without noting a source) in which a narcotic was used to contact the spirit world as follows, saying that when people in India "... wish to obtain spiritual information, they sometimes give (it is said) a narcotic prepared from the seeds of the *dhatura* plant, to a boy or old man, and place much reliance on his answers to their questions, while under its intoxicating influence." ft. 2, p. 148.

¹⁸ Haug & West, p. 151, ft. 5.

¹⁹ The *Arda Viraf Namah* describes the soul of a "pious" person crossing Chinvat Bridge and meeting a beautiful damsel representing "his own religion, and his own deeds" (Ch. 4, §§ 18 - 34, pp. 154 - 155). And the soul of a "wicked one" sees (presumably the impropriety of) "his own religion and deeds, as a profligate woman" who was not only ugly, but also "most filthy and most stinking." (Ch. 17, §§ 12 - 26, pp. 165 - 166).

These descriptions of the beautiful and ugly women are also found in the Pazand *Mainyo-ikhard* although quite differently expressed, (detailed in *Part One: Buried Treasure in Zoroastrian Stories*). We find roughly the same story of the beautiful damsel representing a person's own goodness, in a YAv. Fragment (which may have been written after YAv. times). But it is significant (is it not?) that this YAv. text does not mention the ugly hag who meets the soul of a wicked person representing his bad deeds ~ there being no concept of 'hell' as a place of torment in Avestan texts (discussed in *Part Three: Heaven In Other Avestan Texts*; and *The Absence of Damnation & Hell in Other Avestan Texts*).

The *Arda Viraf Namah* also mentions darkness, stench, and severe cold and heat, in connection with 'hell' (Ch. 17, §§ 10 - 11, pp. 166 - 167; Ch.18, §§ 1 - 9 p. 168; Ch. 54 §§ 1 - 4, p. 183) which we also find (more lightly described) in a YAv. Fragment (discussed in *The Absence of Damnation & Hell in Other Avestan Texts*).

In the Gathas, 'darkness' is used metaphorically to indicate the 'hell' of a mind which is mistaken, wrong, which lacks understanding, is unenlightened. Stench, cold and heat are not used in the Gathas ~ even as metaphors.

²⁰ The effectiveness of this control mechanism ~ fear of hell ~ even as late as the 19th century in India, was recorded by Haug & West, 1872 in their Introductory Essays, to *The Book of Arda Viraf*, § III, p. lv, where they state (sometimes quoting a contemporary, Dastur Hoshangji) that when the *Arda Viraf Namah* was occasionally read (in Gujarati translation) before large assemblies of Zoroastrians in India, the audience was "overpowered" by what they heard and "especially the gentler sex" wept at the "terrifically described" punishments, but that more recently (Dastur Hoshangji noted with sarcastic indignation) "in our days of progress" this text was criticized as "a mythological work" even by "a Parsi Dastur".

To which I say, three cheers for that "Parsi Dastur" and other priests who are not afraid to think, to reason! The path of reason is exactly the path which Zarathushtra himself took, when confronted by the practices of the religious establishment of his day ~ questioning and re-thinking the religious practices of his culture (discussed in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*).

²¹ There are no demons or devils in the Gathas. The YAv. and Pahlavi 'demons' started out as human vices, as their names demonstrate. And even in Pahlavi times, Dinkard 6 shows that there was a school of thought that these 'demons' were not real ~ not actual demons, (detailed in *Part One: Does The Devil Exist?*).

²² For example:

Ch.36, § 6 "the wicked man who, in the world, committed apostacy"; p. 177.

Ch. 47, § 5 "those who, in the world, have been apostates and deceivers..." pp. 180 - 181.

Ch. 61, §§ 5 - 7 "... those wicked who, in the world, believed not in the spirit, and they have been unthankful in the religion ... They have been doubtful of the happiness which is in heaven, and the torment which is in hell, and about the reality of the resurrection of the dead and the future body." p. 186.

²³ For example, in the YAv. *Mihir Yasht*, we see the following:

§1, "Said Ahura Mazda to Zarathushtra the Spitamid: ...

§ 2 "... Never break a contract [*miθram*], 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." Gershevitch translation 1967, *The Avestan Hymn To Mithra*, pp. 74, 75.

²⁴ Detailed in *Part Three: Xratu*. Following H. P. Schmidt) I translate *x ratu-* as 'reason/reasoning' (detailed in a ft. above).

²⁵ *Part Five: The Pahlavi Texts* shows that the Pahlavi 'translations' were not actual translations. They were more explanations ~ ideas or understandings that the writer had been taught, regarding what a given Avestan verse or section said.

²⁶ Somewhat similar to the story in the Pazand *Mainyo-ikhard*, described in *Part One: Buried Treasure in Ancient Stories*.

²⁷ 'Next of kin' is identified in some YAv. texts as a relationship to 'the ninth degree'. See *Part Four: Next of Kin Marriage*.

²⁸ Detailed and quoted in *Part One: Buried Treasure in Ancient Stories*.

²⁹ Detailed in *Part One: Buried Treasure in Ancient Stories*.

³⁰ This mention of "warriors" in the *Arda Viraf Namah* is the only piece of evidence which makes me wonder if at least some of the ideas of the text may have originated during Sasanian times ~ these "warriors" are mentioned with regard to the rewards of heaven (an idea that definitely existed during Sasanian times), not the punishments of hell (an idea that may not have existed in Sasanian times). After the Arab invasion, Zoroastrian 'warriors' would have been few and far between. However, we know (historically) that there were sporadic rebellions and resistance in some areas, during certain time periods, after the Arab invasion, so it is possible that this reference to 'warriors' may have been to the reward for such warriors. We have no way of knowing for certain.

³¹ Mentioned in *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*.

³² E. W. West's 1871, *The Book of Mainyo-ikhard*, a Pazand text. West gives the entire Pazand text itself (transliterated) as well as his translation of it (in its entirety). This text also exists in Pahlavi and in a Persian form (Mino-khirad). West states that the original text was doubtless written in Pahlavi, but that existing Pahlavi translations "appear to be merely re-translations from the Pazand." (Intro. p. x).

West estimates that the text, was most probably was written during the middle period of Sasanian rule. He says that among the Sasanian kings, Shahpur II (308 - 380 C. E.) and Khusru Nushirvan (531 - 579 C. E.) were celebrated for their encouragement of literature, and he surmises that the author of this work most probably "lived in the time of the latter of those two kings," if not earlier. West 1871 *Mainyo-ikhard*, Intro. pp. x - xi).

With respect, I disagree. I think this text was written after the Arab invasion of Iran for the following reasons.

True, the destruction of texts following the Arab invasion, was so widespread that we cannot say for certain when the *Mainyo-ikhard* may have been originally written. However, some bits and pieces of its internal evidence suggest (to me) that it was written at a time when Zoroastrians lived as a minority under a sovereign who was not Zoroastrian. For example:

The text states,

"104 Be not reliant on monarchy; 105 since in the end, it is necessary for thee to be without a king." (p. 133),

This maxim has a haunting quality. It seems to reflect the sorrow of being part of a persecuted minority ~ without the protection of a king who was Zoroastrian.

Its description of the material existence as "terrible" and "mischievous" (Ch. 2, § 149, p. 135) would have reflected the persecution and difficulties endured by the Zoroastrians after the Arab invasion.

So also, the author's expressed desire to preserve in this work what was remembered by too few practitioners of the religion, suggests a society after the Arab invasion immediately after which (and periodically thereafter) so many Zoroastrians were either killed or forced to convert, so that the remaining practitioners were much fewer, and much knowledge was indeed lost and not remembered.

³³ The format which the author uses to convey his understanding of Zarathushtra's thought, is similar to the Avestan formula in which Zarathushtra (purportedly) asks questions, which Ahura Mazda (purportedly) answers ~ giving the views of the author the authority of Divine writ. But the format of the *Mainyo-ikhard*, is slightly different, in that the author has a 'sage' ask questions, to which answers are given by the spirit of wisdom (or as West's alternative states, 'the spirit that is wisdom') ~ indicating (to me at least) that the author may have wanted to substitute words (easily recognized by Zoroastrians) for the names 'Zarathushtra' and 'Ohrmazd' in a religiously intolerant environment.

³⁴ Pahlavi writers often used Av. (but with a Pahlavi complexion) for certain key words. Thus, "Dushmat (evil thoughts)" from GAv. *duž.manah-* 'having bad thoughts' (Skjaervo 2006); "Duzhukht (evil words)" from GAv. *duš/duž* 'bad', and GAv. *ux da-* 'word', (Skjaervo 2006); "Duzhvareshht (evil deeds)" from GAv. *duž.varəšta-* 'bad action' (which Skjaervo 2006 shows is related to *varz-* 'to produce'), ~ thus literally 'making bad a reality'.

³⁵ If the translation here is accurate, the idea of the person in darkness needing a hand, echoes a concept that we see throughout the Gathas (and even in the Pahlavi *Selections of Zad-sparam*) ~ that of mutual, loving, help ~ as something that we all need, and have to both give and receive, in order for us to make it, as I have discussed in many chapters, including particularly the following, in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*, and *A Friendly Universe*, and in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution*, and *The Manthra of Choice, Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo)*.

However, E. W. West translates a section of the *Bundahishn*, as follows, "Regarding ... hell it says, that the darkness is fit to grasp with the hand..." *Bundahishn*, Ch. 28, § 47, SBE 5, p. 114, and in his ft. 2, he says "Compare Mkh. VII, 31: 'and always their darkness is such-like as though it be possible to grasp with the hand.'" This translation is different from his translation in *The Book of the Mainyo-ikhard* which says "[§ 31] ... and always their darkness is such-like as when it will be necessary to hold by the hand". There are Persian (*Mino Khirad*) and Pazand (*Mainyo-i-Khard*) versions of this text, and I do not know if these two different translations arise from the Persian and Pazand versions, or if West himself was of two minds regarding the correct translation of the passage I have quoted from his translation of the *Mainyo-i-Khard*. In any event, the

concept of generosity, and helping others, is as important a quality of the good person in the later texts as it is in the Gathas. Indeed, 'mutual assistance' is one of the three requisites for perfecting existence in the Pahlavi text *Selections of Zad-spāram*, Ch. 1, § 19, SBE 5, p. 158 (quoted in *Part Three: The Ahuna Vairya, Ancient Commentaries*).

³⁶ Here is the full quotation in chronological order, (Ch. 7, §§ 20 - 31; Pazand words p. 16; English part, p. 141). The numbers indicate West's §§ numbers presumably following the Pazand paragraphs. The identity of the "they" is presumably demons.

A state of being

"20 And hell [*dôzhakh*] is first Dushmat (evil thoughts), and second Duzhukht (evil words), and third Duzhvareshht (evil deeds);

21 with the fourth footstep, the wicked man arrives at that which is the darkest hell;

A place

22 and they conduct him onwards to the vicinity of Aharman the wicked.

23 And Aharman and the demons treat him, thereupon, with ridicule and mockery

24 thus: ' From Hormezd, and the sweet-scented, well-pleasing heaven [*vahesht*], what was thy trouble and distress, when thou approachedst for a sight of us and gloomy hell?

25 that we may do mischief and not pity thee in it, and thou mayest see mischief of long duration? '

26 And afterwards, they perform his punishment and torment of various kinds upon him.

27 And he is experienced in cold that is such as that of the coldest ice and snow;

28 and he is experienced in heat that is such as that of the hottest and most blazing fire;

29 and he is experienced that they cause the *kharvatar* to gnaw them, just as a dog *does a* skeleton;

30 and he is experienced in stench that is such that they will scatter and will fall;

31 and always their darkness is such-like as when it will be necessary to hold by the hand". p. 141.

³⁷ These words of the Evil Spirit echo the words it uses in a YAv. Fragment (which may have been written after YAv. times).

³⁸ The Spirit of Wisdom (supposedly) says that the punishment of the man who is "world-adorning and spirit-destroying" is total destruction (according to E. W. West's translation).

"The Spirit of Wisdom answered thus: He who is a world-adorning and spirit-destroying man is so destroyed, in a single punishment of three days, as a raging fire when water comes upon it." § 9, p. 153.

On the plus side, it is worth noting that "fire" here is used as an illustration, in which it is equated with the wrongdoing of being "world-adorning and spirit-destroying" ~ which is quenched, put out, eliminated, by water. Therefore, in the mind of this author (who lived during Pahlavi times), fire could not have been thought of as a deity to be worshipped in the Zoroastrianism of Pahlavi times.

On the minus side, in all the Zoroastrian texts that I have studied (to the best of my recollection), this is the only instance that I can recall, in which the punishment was the "destruction" of a soul. I do not know Pahlavi, and so cannot independently check out E. W. West's translation. However (with respect) certain aspects of the above quotation indicate to me that the 'error' is in the translation. For example, the 'evil' man is described here as "spirit-destroying". Now a man can destroy someone's body and he can harm, or hurt, or mislead, someone's spirit, but I have not seen any Zoroastrian text which says that a man can "destroy" (as in annihilate) another person's spirit. So I question whether West's translation, in which the person who 'destroys' someone's spirit, and is himself 'destroyed' could be accurate. Perhaps the Pahlavi word has a different meaning than 'destroy' (as in annihilate, cease to exist).

³⁹ The Pazand text of this quotation uses the word *Hamestaga* uniformly. In other texts we have *Hamestagan*. It is possible that *Hamestaga* was the place, and *Hamestagan* were the people in that place. But West does not show that difference.

In this text, *Hamestaga* is described as follows:

"Regarding the *Hamestaga* it is declared, that: *They are* from the earth unto the star track; and except cold and heat, their affliction is not otherwise anything else." Ch. 7, § 18, p. 141.

The earth to the star track presumable indicating an earlier level of spiritual evolution?

⁴⁰ See *Part One: Zarathushtra's Paradise in This World & the Next*.

⁴¹ [Referring to Wisdom] "... Him who has the appearance of the sun..." Y43.16;
[Referring to Wisdom] "... the good companion of sunlike truth ..." Y32.2;
[Referring to Zarathushtra's daughter] "... the sunlike gain of good thinking ..." Y53.4.

⁴² Here is Darmesteter's translation of this part of the *Farvardin Yasht*.

"57. We worship the good, strong, beneficent Fravashis ... their paths to the stars, the moon, the sun, and the endless lights, that had stood before for a long time in the same place, without moving forwards, through the oppression of the Daevas and the assaults of the Daevas.

58 And now they move around in their far-revolving circle for ever, till they come to the time of the good restoration [*frašō.karətōiṭ vañhuyā*] of the world." *Farvardin Yasht*, Yt. 13.57 - 58, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 194; Av. words from Geldner 2P p. 181.

Darmesteter's translation gives the stars, moon, sun and endless lights a dat. translation 'to...' But actually, each of these words is genitive ('of...'). His translation 'to ...' makes the paths of the stars, moon, sun, and endless lights a place. The more literal 'of ...' makes these four types of light, qualities of the fravashis. At first thought the stars, moon and sun seem to be physical things. But the fravashis are the divine in each fragment of existence (see *Part Three: Fravashi*). The path of the Divine (fravashis) is the path of Wisdom's attributes (amesha spenta), the path of the true order of existence, its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule, its attainment, the beneficial way of being ~ a path which would indeed lead to an incremental progression in enlightenment, represented by starlight, moonlight, sunlight, and the ultimately endless lights.

But what (I wonder) was the significance in the *Farvardin Yasht* of these lights not moving because of the oppression of the daevas, but now move around in their far revolving circle until existence reaches its assured good end? Could it mean that progression in enlightenment was obstructed by the ways of the local gods (whose teachings are described as tyrannical, cruel, violent, harmful, wrathful etc. in the Gathas), and that with the advent of Zarathushtra who taught the path of truth, the path of goodness, the progression was able to move again until the good end was reached? Did the author(s) of the *Farvardin Yasht* incorporate these ideas from the Gathas, with an understanding of the metaphoric nature of these levels of light? Were they just repeating an earlier teaching without understanding what the metaphors represented? I do not know.

Those who are not interested in linguistics may prefer to skip the rest of this footnote. For those who would like to see proof of the linguistic conclusions mentioned above, the following may be of interest. Here is the relevant part of the *Farvardin Yasht*, Yt. 13.57,

"We worship the good, strong, beneficent Fravashis ..., their paths to [of] the stars, the moon, the sun, and [of] the endless lights [... *yā strəm māñhō hūrō anayranəm raocanḥəm*], ..." Yt. 13.57, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 194; Avestan words from Geldner 2P pp. 180 - 181.

In § 57 (quoted above) the word 'paths' does not appear in the Av. text. It is implied from the previous § 56, where it is mentioned [*pañtqm*] gen. pl. 'of (the) paths'. Here in § 57, the implied paths are 'that of (the) stars, of (the) moon, of (the) sun, of (the) endless lights' ~ each of the last 4 words being gen. (sg. or pl. as applicable). Specifically,

pañtqm 'of (the) paths' (stem *pañtā-/pañdā-* masc. Skjaervo 2003; the *-tqm* inflection is gen. pl. for this stem, Jackson § 236, p. 72).

ya̅ 'that' a relative pronoun, nom./acc. pl. ntr. of the stem *ya-* Jackson 1892 § 404, p. 115; in § 57 referring to the previously mentioned *pañtqm* 'of (the) paths';

strqm 'of (the) stars' (stem *star-* masc. Skjaervo 2003; the inflected form *strqm* is gen. pl. of this type of stem Jackson 1892 p. 94, and § II (F) et seq, pp. 93 - 96);

māñhō 'of (the) moon' (stem *māh-* masc. Skjaervo 2006; the *-ñhō* inflection is gen. sg. of *āh-* stems Jackson § 352, p. 101);

hūrō 'of (the) sun' (YAv. stem *hvar/hvan* ntr. Skjaervo 2003; *hūrō* is gen. sg. for these types of stems Jackson § 334, p. 96);

anayranqm 'of (the) endless' (stem *anayra-* Skjaervo 2003; the *-anqm* inflection is gen. pl. for *a-* stems Jackson, § 236, p. 70);

raocañhqm 'of (the) lights' (stem *raocah-* ntr. Skjaervo 2003; the *-añhqm* inflection is gen. pl. of this type of stem Jackson § 339, p.98).

⁴³ Discussed in *Part Three: Fravashi*.

⁴⁴ By the time of the *Bundahishn*, a belief in Cosmic Dualism (two uncreated spirits) had become established ~ a belief we do not find in the Gathas. Speaking of these two spirits, the *Bundahishn* says:

"Both are limited and unlimited spirits, for the supreme is that which they call endless light ..."
Bundahishn, Ch. 1, § 5, E. W. West translation, SBE 5, p. 4.

⁴⁵ See, for example, in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*; and *The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

⁴⁶ *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, (1988).

⁴⁷ See *Part Four: Zarathushtra's Time and Place*.

⁴⁸ *Webster's New Ninth Collegiate Dictionary* (1988 ed.), under 'medieval' and 'Middle Ages'.

⁴⁹ The Gathas' view is detailed in *Part One*: chapters 1.3 through 1.8.

⁵⁰ If you compare the account of what happens to the soul after death in the Pazand *Mainyo-i-khard*, with the account in the two YAv. *Fragments* 22 and 24 (which are detailed in *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*), you will see similarities and differences. It demonstrates how transmitted information (with the best of intentions) changes over the centuries. But I would like to point out one difference, which I think is rather poignant.

In the YAv. *Fragments*, the other souls in 'heaven' who come to meet the newly arrived soul, describe the soul's earthly existence which it has left behind as a joyful place ~ reflecting the life-celebrating Avestan mind-set.

"...How didst thou come ... from the abodes full of cattle and full of the wishes and enjoyments of love? From the material world into the world of the spirit? From the decaying world into the undecaying one? How long did thy felicity last?" *Fragment 22.16*, Darmesteter translation SBE 23, p. 317.

In th Pazand *Mainyo-ikhard*, the soul's earthly existence is described as terrible, and (impliedly) afflicted,

"How has thou come, from that which is a corruptible, terrible, *and* very mischievous world, to this incorruptible, unafflicted world ..." Ch. 2, § 149, p. 135.

By the time of this Pazand text, when Zoroastrians were a persecuted minority in Iran, earthly existence had become an affliction. It no longer had the joy of life of YAv. times. And yet, in such terrible times, good souls like the original author of the *Mainyo-ikhard* did the best they could to keep alive so much that was good in the religion.

⁵¹ Detailed in *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*.

⁵² E. W. West's Introduction to the *Bundahishn*, p. xxii - xxiii.

⁵³ In the *Bundahishn* Ch. 30, § 9 the bit about the light and its dividing, is a puzzle to me. Here is § 9 along with the preceding section, to give you context. Although West speaks of "caste" in his footnote, in the entire history of the religion there have never been Zoroastrian 'castes' except for the much later development of an hereditary priesthood (see *Part Four: Castes & Heredity*). In the following quotation, West sometimes gives the Pahlavi words in round parentheses.

"§ 8 Afterwards, when all material living beings assume again their bodies *and* forms, then they assign (bara yehabund) them a single class. [ft. 2. "The phrase is obscure ... but the meaning is probably that all former distinctions of class, or caste, are abolished."].

§ 9 Of the light accompanying (levatman) the sun, one half will *be* for Gayomard, and one half will give enlightenment among the rest of men, so that the soul *and* body will know that this is my father, and this is my mother, and this is my brother, and this is my wife, and these are some other of my nearest relations." [???

⁵⁴ "...they cast the wicked **back** to hell." § 12; Why **back** to hell? Has the "wicked" man been in hell before this end of times event? If so, the punishment of those 'wicked' people who died earliest, would be much longer than the punishment of those who died closer to the end of times event. Hardly 'just' (or rational). I do not have access to the Pahlavi text (and do not know Pahlavi in any event) and so cannot tell you what Pahlavi word West has translated as "**back**". If this is an inaccurate translation, then the duration of 'hell' would be for 3 days in the *Bundahishn*. But then, what has the soul of a person ~ 'good' or 'bad' ~ been doing from the time of death to the end of times event when they are separated and the 'bad' to go 'hell' for 3 days? This text does not say.

⁵⁵ Here are §§ 14 - 16 of the *Bundahishn*. The last section (which seems to refer to legendary figures who were very, very evil ~ in fact evil incarnate) is a puzzle to me which West's footnote does not clarify.

§ 14 "As it says that, on the day when the righteous *man* is parted from the wicked, the tears of every one, thereupon run down unto *his* legs.

§ 15 When after they set apart a father from his consort (hambaz), a brother from his brother, a friend from his friend, they suffer, every one for his own deeds *and* weep, the righteous for the wicked, and the wicked about himself; for there may be a father who is righteous *and* a son wicked, *and* there may be one brother who is righteous, *and* one wicked.

§ 16 Those for whose peculiar deeds it is appointed, such as Dahak and Frastyav of Tur, *and* others of this sort, as deserving death (marg-arganan), undergo a punishment no other men undergo; they call it 'the punishment of the three nights'." pp. 124 - 125.

⁵⁶ § 24 and 25, p. 126, are a puzzle to me. They speak of preparing the dead, but preceding sections already speak of a general resurrection of the dead. § 24 says

"Auharmazd completes *his work* at that time, *and* creatures become so that it is not necessary to make any effort about them [?]; *and* among those by whom the dead are prepared, it is not necessary *that* any effort be made [?]." p. 126.

§ 25 says Soshyans, with his assistants, "performs a Yazisn *ceremony* in preparing the dead" which includes preparing something (using Hom) and giving it "to all men, and all men become immortal for ever *and* everlasting." p. 126.

In old Iranian religion (pre-dating Zarathushtra), Haoma was plant, the spiritual essence of which (haoma the deity) was associated with immortality. In the Gathas, Zarathushtra does not worship Haoma, or perform its rituals. But the rituals and worship of Haoma became syncretized with Zarathushtra's religion, after Zarathushtra's time. So here, we see a strand of religious thought that is from Zarathushtra's culture, but which was not a part of Zarathushtra's teachings.

§ 26 tells us what bodily age (forty years; fifteen years) each resurrected person will assume, and that everyone will have his wife and children, "so they act as now in the world, but there is no begetting of children." Here, (once again), we see the one-dimensional, illogical thinking of the religious establishment. Married couples who were unhappy together, or who harmed each other, would not consider this any idea of 'heaven'. And how would the children of "everyone" be? As they were when little, and living with their parents? As parents themselves? As they were when grown up and perhaps following pursuits their parents may have disapproved of?

§ 27 "Afterwards, Soshyans *and his assistants*, by order of the creator Auharmazd, give every man the reward and recompense suitable to his deeds; this is even the righteous existence (ait) where it is said that they convey *him* to paradise (vahisht), and the heaven (garodman) of Auharmazd takes up the body (kerp) as itself requires [?]; with that assistance he continually advances for ever *and* everlasting." The first part is inconsistent with §§ 10 - 13 quoted in the main part of this chapter. The spiritual evolution implied by the words "he continually advances" is certainly a part of Zarathushtra's teachings in *mortal* existence. But here, the author is speaking of 'heaven', at which point any spiritual evolution should be complete. So here the author's understanding is a mixed up account of Zarathushtra's original thought. Unless of course the translation is at fault.

§ 28 "This, too, it says that whoever has performed no worship (yasht), and has ordered no Geti-kharid [long ft. explaining a ritual], and has bestowed no clothes as a righteous gift, is naked there; and he performs the worship (yasht) of Auharmazd, and the heavenly angels provide him the use of his clothing."

Here, 2 other strands of the tradition are inserted into the text, without any relevance to, or connection with, what went before or what follows. It seems to be just one strand of traditional belief, stuck in here just to include it in this collection of traditional beliefs.

⁵⁷ § 33 recounts the end of the Chinvar (Av. Chinvat) bridge which of course is no longer needed, because everyone has crossed over to a state of non-deathness.

"This too, it says, that this earth *becomes* an iceless, slopeless plain; even the mountain, whose summit is the support of the Chinvar *bridge* they keep down, *and* it *will* not exist." § 33, pp. 129 - 130.

⁵⁸ Discussed in *Part One: Buried Treasure in Ancient Stories*.

⁵⁹ Discussed in *Part Two: Molten, Glowing Metal*.

⁶⁰ For the idea in the Gathas, that bad is overcome through good, see *Part Two: The Puzzle of Bad for the Bad*; and *Asha & The Checkmate Solution*; and for this idea expressed in a YAv. text, see *Part One: A YAv. Blessing*, Yy 60.5.

⁶¹ Zaehner 1961 p. 308 and footnoted references. The YAv. concept of *frašō.kərəiti-* and its GAv. source, is detailed in *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*.

⁶² Discussed in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution*.

⁶³ E. W. West, in a footnote to his translation of the *Bundahishn* identifies three kinds of 'spans', the following descriptions are his: The Avestan vitasti of twelve finger-breadths, or about 9 inches which is the full span between the thumb and little finger; the Av. dishti or ten finger-breadths, which is about seven and a half inches and is the span between the thumb and the middle finger; and the Av. uzashti of eight finger-breadths or about 6 inches, which is the span between the thumb and fore-finger. SBE 5, p. 98, ft. 3. Even if we assume that the text quoted in the main part of this chapter intended the largest span of 9", having a thousand men closely packed within a single span (9") expresses the idea of extreme physical closeness, in spite of which each man thinks he is alone ("... and the loneliness is worse than its punishment...").

⁶⁴ Similarly the Pahlavi text *Arda Viraf Namah*, says:

"...as close as the ear to the eye, and as many as the hairs on the mane of a horse, so close and many in number, the souls of the wicked stand, but they see not, and hear no sound, one from the other; every one thinks thus, 'I am alone'..."Haug & West *The Book of Arda Viraf* Ch. 54 §§ 5 - 8, pp. 183 - 184.

In the *Arda Viraf Namah*, this aloneness occurs in the "darkest hell" which is a pit, Ch. 54 § 3, p. 183. In this text also, there is no understanding of the underlying significance of this story. But the fact that this idea of 'hell' (as total aloneness) appears in both the *Arda Viraf Namah*, and the *Bundahishn*, is persuasive evidence (in my view) that this idea of a 'hell' (a bad existence) that misperceives itself as being totally alone, was well known and had an earlier origin.

⁶⁵ Detailed in *Part One: Completeness and Non-Deathness, Haurvatat / Ameretat*, and also in *Part One: The Identity of the Divine*, and *Part Two: A Question of Immanence*.

⁶⁶ SBE 5, pp. 372 - 379. This particular Fragment must have been valued, because it is also found in manuscripts M6 and L15, and a Pazand version of it is found in manuscripts L22 and L7.

West appends this particular Fragment (which he calls "Chapter XV") along with other Pahlavi Fragments, as an Appendix to the Pahlavi text *Shayast La-Shayast*, (a text I do not admire ... to put it politely. Reading it makes one understand completely, why the *Arda Viraf Namah* said that disbelief and doubt abounded in the community. I would have been one such disbeliever!).

But West states in a footnote that these Fragments are not a part of the *Shayast La-Shayast*, SBE Vol. 5, p. 372, ft. 1. However he does not number these Fragments separately. Instead he numbers them as "chapters" chronologically following *Shayast La-Shayast* ~ which in my view was not well done. He should have identified them as what they were ~ separate Fragments.

Appending them to the *Shayast*, and numbering them as though they were Appendix chapters of the *Shayast* (even as an Appendix) was not in keeping with West's normal meticulous attention to accuracy. A casual reader (who does not bother with footnotes) would think these 'chapters' are a part of the *Shayast* text. West acknowledges, they are not. But it is interesting. The fact that West appends a number of such Fragments

to *Shayast La-Shayast*, as numbered chapters of that text, shows how easy it would have been for ancient copiers to do the same thing ~ to include different fragments as part of a text being copied. This is what I think happened to the Pazand *Mainyo-i-khard*, resulting in its many inconsistencies.

⁶⁷ See *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*, and *A Question of Reward & the Path*.

⁶⁸ The multi-dimensioned ways in which the Divine and each of its qualities (amesha spenta) are linked with various material things, is detailed in *Part Two: A Question of Immanence; Light, Glory, Fire; Molten, Glowing Metal; and Earth, Waters & Plants*.

⁶⁹ in SBE Vol. 5, pp. xxxiii - xxxiv. The Gathas idea of worshipping the Divine with good thoughts, words and actions is also found in some YAv. texts, detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*.

⁷⁰ Detailed in *Part Two: A Question of Reward & The Path*.

⁷¹ Here, the 'sinfulness' of a wife who is disrespectful to her husband, at least requires that the husband being "active and virtuous".

⁷² The section goes on to say that when anyone who does such wrongful things without atonement, "departs from the world", the spirits of all the waters and the plants "stand up high in front of that man, and do not let him go to heaven." SBE Vol. 5, p. 378. Did this author think that the man who acted wrongfully would be prevented (by his wrong conduct) from attaining a most-good state of being? or a most good place? I do not know Pahlavi (and in any event have no access to this text in Pahlavi), and therefore cannot decipher the author's intent. And we do not know if such embroideries were in the original text or were add-ons by less knowledgeable souls. In any event, I honor the original author because he cared enough about the original teachings to transmit them as accurately as he could, ~ promoting good actions and urging man to refrain from dishonest destructive ones ~ while trying to make sense of the teachings based on the perceptions of his own time period.