

The Manthra of Truth, Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu).

In Avestan texts, the name of this mantra is the Asha Vahishta. But after Avestan times, it was called by its first two words, Ashem Vohu, and that is how people call it today.

It is a melody on truth ~ the true (correct) order of existence (*ašəm*) ~ which is the first and last word of the mantra.

Some scholars today think that it is not in poetry because it has no meter. It is true that it is not in the meter of any Gatha. But to conclude that therefore it is not poetry imposes our narrow definition of 'poetry' on an ancient culture, which may have had completely different ideas of what poetry is, including alliteration, rhythm, repetition, and a simple poetic meter (other than those found in the Gathas).

As any Zoroastrian child who has memorized and recited it knows, the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) has cadences that are alliterative, rhythmic and repetitive which is indeed the music of poetry. Its rhythmic cadences in my view, are linked to its intended meaning ~ a linkage that discussed in another chapter.¹

I agree with those scholars who think this mantra was composed by Zarathushtra himself, because it bears the signature of his multi-dimensional thinking and poetic style.

A few preliminary matters:

In my translation of line a., I use the full definition of *aša-* 'the true (correct) order of existence'. But in line c., I use the short hand version 'truth' because the full definition would be too long and awkward.

Although the diagonal slash / usually marks the poetic break in each line of a Gatha verse, here it indicates that a given word is used with two or more meanings (double entendre). And yes, I agree. This makes for awkward reading. But it enriches our understanding of this mantra. So I hope you will find the awkward reading worthwhile.

Finally, in my translation I have added an implied verb ('is' *asī*) (in round parentheses) in lines a. and c. This accords with normal Avestan usage, in which a word is implied which has been (previously or subsequently) stated, and *asī* is stated in lines a. and b. Linguists call this elipsis (just to be difficult).

- a. *ašəm. vohū. vahištəm. asī.*
- b. *uštā. asī. uštā. ahmāi.*
- c. *hyač. ašāi. vahištāi. ašəm. Y27.14.*

- a. The true (correct) order of existence (is) good; the most-good² (existence) it is,
- b. desire it! /under will it is, (double entendre for the first *uštā*)
happiness ! bliss ! / enlightenment ! (it is) (double entendre for the 2d *uštā*); for that (existence)
- c. which (is) truth, for truth's own most-good sake. Y27.14.

At the simplest level, the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) stands for the proposition:

- * That the true (correct) order of existence is the most good ~ superlative degree of intrinsic goodness,
- * That we should desire it, choose it, that it is 'under will' meaning that we can will it into existence, in ourselves and in our world;
- * That it is happiness in mortal existence, as well as the bliss that is enlightenment (which is Zarathushtra's notion of paradise ~ the house of song, the house of good thinking); and
- * That we should desire the true (correct) order of existence for its own, most good, sake ~ not to be well thought of, not because we want to be rewarded, not because we fear punishment, or 'hell', or 'bad karma', but simply for its own sake ~ truth for truth's own sake (I love that!).

This mantra encapsulates another of Zarathushtra's basic teachings ~ the power of goodness. We have come to think of 'evil' as more powerful than 'good' in our world. And sometimes that is true in the short run. But Zarathushtra teaches a different view. He associates 'power' in our existence with the qualities that make a being divine (amesha spenta),³ ~ all of which are components of the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*). And the foundation and centerpiece of this poem is the recognition that the true (correct) order of existence is most good ~ the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness ~ Asha Vahishta ~ an idea that is corroborated in the YAv. *Visperad* which says,

... •• *vahištəm tīštīm yazamaide yəm ašahe vahištahe*•• Geldner 2P p. 30;

'the power of the most good we worship/celebrate ~ that of the most good truth (Asha Vahishta);' *Visperad* 23.1; my translation.⁴

Is this idea valid? Is 'good' powerful in our world? After 78 years of living, I have come to the conclusion that it is. But this is something that you have to decide for yourself.

So far we have looked at the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) at a basic level.

But this mantra has additional dimensions of thought that are quite lovely. It has 3 words that are used in multi-dimensional ways which, when applied here, give this mantra a deeper significance as we become aware of the beautiful interplay of meanings in these 3 words. They are:

- ~ *aša-* (of which *ašəm* and *ašāi* in lines a. and c. are grammatical forms),
- ~ *vahišta-* (of which *vahištəm* and *vahištāi* in lines a. and c. are grammatical forms, and
- ~ *uštā* (which appears twice in line b.).

After you see what these multi-dimensional meanings are, you may (if you wish) re-read the mantra with this deeper understanding to appreciate its significance. It probably has more significance than I have discovered, but this is what I have discovered to date.

aša- (*ašəm*, *ašāi*),⁵

Summarizing the ways in which Zarathushtra uses *aša-* in the Gathas,

- ~ the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*) comprises ~ its comprehension good thinking (*vohu-manah-*), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta- arməiti-*), its

good rule (*vohu- xšaθra-*), its complete, undying attainment (*haurvatāt-, amərətāt*), comprising the wholly beneficial-sacred way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*);⁶

- the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), is the nature of the Divine ~ the existence of Wisdom (*mazdā-*) ~ who is divine not because He is inherently a deity, but because of the nature of His being;
- the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), and its components ~ its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule, a beneficial way of being ~ are divine qualities that man also has, although sporadically, imperfectly, not completely;
- the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*) is the path to the Divine (the path of truth, the path of the amesha spenta), and
- the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*) is the reward for taking that path (the complete attainment of the qualities of the divine),⁷ which is Zarathushtra's notion of salvation, paradise ~ a state of being that is the true (correct) order of existence (*ahu- vahišta-* 'the most-good existence'),⁸ which is the existence of the Divine,

So in line a. of the mantra ('The true (correct) order of existence (is) good; the most-good (existence) it is,') we see that the concept of intrinsic goodness is central to Zarathushtra's thought in all these many and varied aspects of existence, which is corroborated by a later name for the religion ~ the religion of goodness (*din-i behi*).

vahišta- (*vahištəm, vahištāi*),⁹

vahišta- means intrinsic goodness in the superlative degree, ~ literally 'most good'. Translators generally translate *vahišta-* as 'best', both in the Gathas and in this mantra, the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu). Now it is true that in English 'best' is the superlative degree of 'good' (as in *good, better, best*). But 'best' has long since acquired a competitive meaning in English that has nothing to do with intrinsic goodness, (*this horror movie is the best; those fashions are the best; that pizza was the best*). A preference amongst horror movies, fashions, and pizza, has nothing to do with the notion of intrinsic goodness in the superlative degree. There is no evidence in the Gathas that *vahišta-* is used in any sense that is unrelated to the concept of intrinsic goodness (except for interpretations personal to a translator). Therefore (with respect) Zarathushtra's thought is not accurately conveyed when *vahišta-* is translated as 'best' ~ neither in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), nor in the Gathas.

So let us think of *vahišta-* in its literal sense, as 'most good' ~ the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness ~ when understanding this mantra.

In Avestan, *vahišta-* is an adjective which can also be used as a noun 'most good (thing)', or 'most good (one)', indicating a thing, or a being, or an existence, that exemplifies the quality of intrinsic goodness in the superlative degree. The multi-dimensional ways in which *vahišta-* is used in the

Gathas is detailed in another chapter.¹⁰ Here, I will summarize them. You will see that many of these ways echo the ways in which *aša-* is used (shown above).

vahišta- 'most good' is used as a name for the Divine, *θwā vahištā* "Thee, Best One..." Y28.8, Insler 1975, or more literally, "Thee, Most Good (One)...".

vahišta- 'most good' is used to describe the qualities that make a being divine (*amesha spenta*) ~ the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), its comprehension good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta- ārmaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu- xšaθra-*), comprising the beneficial-sacred way of being, (*spənta- mainyu-*);

vahišta- 'most good' is used to describe Wisdom's teachings, and the words and actions which implement these teachings, (which is the concept of *ārmaiti-* ~ truth embodied in thought, word and action), which Zarathushtra calls the path of truth, the path of His divine qualities (*amesha spenta*), the path of the beneficial-sacred way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*);

vahišta- 'most good' is used for the reward for taking the path of truth, which reward is attaining the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), and its component parts (*amesha spenta*) ~ all of which are the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness (*vahišta-*); and therefore, not surprisingly,

vahišta- 'most good' is equated with Zarathushtra's notion of (what we call) paradise, specifically,

* *ahu- vahišta-* the 'most good existence' ~ an existence that is the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness ~ is one of his names for paradise in the Gathas (and even more often in the YAv. texts). It is the state of being (the existence) that embodies the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*) which is most good (*aša- vahišta-*) in the Gathas and later texts. So Zarathushtra's paradise *ahu- vahišta-* the 'most-good existence' is the most-good, true (correct) order of existence *aša- vahišta-*, the two are equated.

* *vahišta-* is equated with another one of Zarathushtra's names for paradise "... the House of Good Thinking. This is equal to the best [*vahišta-*]..." Y32.15 - 16, Insler 1975. In the Gathas, 'house' is used as a metaphor for a state of being. And indeed (much later) in Persian, the word *behesht* means 'heaven', a word that linguistically is derived from the Avestan *vahišta-*.

There are other descriptions of the existence that is *vahišta-* (Zarathushtra's paradise) in the Gathas and in the later Avestan texts which help us to understand the flavors of the meaning of *vahišta-*, and are relevant to its use in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu).

~ Paradise is called the 'House of Song', indicating a state of bliss ~ like the high we experience when listening to, or creating, or singing, or playing beautiful music;

~ Paradise is called the 'House of Good Thinking', indicating a state of enlightenment ~ one which comprehends completely the true (correct) order of existence; and

~ In YAv. texts, paradise is also called *anayra- raocah-* 'endless lights', a metaphoric way of indicating the state of enlightenment that is the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), recalling that in the Gathas and later texts light, glory, fire, are material metaphors for *aša-* and its component divine qualities (*amesha spenta*).

These uses of *vahišta-* 'most-good' are corroborated in the *Visperad*, a later YAv. text.¹¹ And indeed, in Yy19.6, each of these three things ~ *ahu-* (existence), *aša-* (the true (correct) order of existence), and *raocah-* (light) ~ are equated, each is called *vahišta-*, and each is used in a context that in English would be called 'heaven'.¹²

Thus we get the idea that to Zarathushtra, paradise is the bliss of an enlightened existence ~ an existence which is the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness (*ahu- vahišta-*), which is the wholly good true (correct) order of existence, (*aša- vahišta-*) ~ the existence of the Divine, Wisdom personified (*mazdā-*), the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path ~ a paradise (a state of being) that all the living can attain.

Although at first it shocked me, I now think that it is neat that to Zarathushtra, 'God' is not some perfect being separate and apart from us. The Divine and all the living are parts of the same 'being', so what we call 'God' is simply that part of the being that has already reached enlightenment (wisdom) through understanding, choosing and experiencing *aša-*. This means that 'God' had to choose too, that he had to earn 'heaven' (the state of being that is divine) too. There is a remarkable verse in the Gathas which expresses this thought quite clearly. Referring to himself in the 3d person (as so often happens in ancient poetry) Zarathushtra says,

"What prize Zarathushtra previously promised to his adherents ~ into that House of Song [footnote: "Metaphor for heaven"] did the Wise Lord come as the first one.¹³ This prize has been promised to you during the times of salvation by reason of your good thinking and truth." Y51.15, Insler 1975.

Hold that thought.

uštā

uštā is used twice in line b. ~ each instance referring to *aša-* the 'true (correct) order of existence' in the preceding line a.

In GAv., as in English, a word may have two or more different meanings. And sometimes, the two (or more) meanings can be used with double entendre, in a play of words. For example, 'holiness' can mean something that conforms to religious dogma. It can also mean something that is full of holes (am I being wicked?). Well, let's take another example.

The English word 'light' means visual radiance (*the light of dawn*). It also means something that is not heavy (*light as a feather*). As a verb, 'light' can mean to ignite (*light a fire*), or to illuminate something with happiness (*a smile lights up her face*). Now if a poet intends to use 'light' in a play of words with double entendre in connection with (for example) an angel, he might use 'light' more than once in the same line ~ to indicate radiance, weightlessness, and a being alight with happiness. Since we are fluent in English, we would immediately understand (and enjoy) this word-play.

In the same way, some GAv. words have more than one meaning, and the use of double entendre is a well known technique of Zarathushtra's poetry. I think *uštā* in line 2 of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), is one of these words. Let us consider its different meanings.

uštā is an imperative verb form which means "desire it! wish it!".

uštā is the locative case of a noun which means "under will".¹⁴

uštā is an interjection which means "happiness!".¹⁵

And *uštā* has also been translated as the bliss that is "blessing" (from a state of "happiness, blessedness" *uštātāt-*),¹⁶ and "illumination".¹⁷

Therefore, with *uštā* we have an interplay of meanings, some of which echo the multi-dimensioned ways in which Zarathushtra uses *aša-* and *vahišta-*.

So which of the foregoing meanings does he intend when he uses *uštā* twice in line b.?

I think the first *uštā* is used with double meaning,

(1) as the imperative verb 'desire it!' (referring to *aša-* in the preceding line) in the sense that we must want truth, wish it, choose it ~ a conclusion which seems to be corroborated in the YAv. *Visperad*,¹⁸ and

(2) as a locative noun "under will it is" (*uštā astī*) meaning that we can will the true (correct) order into existence, we can achieve it, attain it, personify it, (I am indebted to Insler for this insight).

And I think the 2d *uštā* is used with double meaning,

(1) the state of being that is happiness in mortal existence, reflecting Zarathushtra's thought that in the long run, happiness can be found only when we are in sync with the true (correct) order of existence, and

(2) the bliss, (3) the illumination that is the complete attainment of the true (correct) order of existence ~ an existence that is Divine, a blissful / enlightened state of being ~ which is Zarathushtra's notion of paradise (the House of Song (bliss), the House of Good Thinking (enlightenment), the 'endless lights' (truth), which echo some of the multiple ways in which Zarathushtra uses *aša-* and *vahišta-* in lines 1 and 3 ~ a conclusion that is re-echoed in a YAv. text, which describes *ahu-vahišta-* the 'most good existence' (paradise) as follows,

... *vahištəm ahūm ašaonqm raōcaṅhəm vīspō.xvādrəm* ...

'... the most-good existence of the truthful we celebrate, light-filled, all-joyful...'. *Visperad*, Ch. 23.1.¹⁹

A few additional thoughts:

There is a lovely interplay between the 'existence' that is *aša-* and the only expressly stated verb in this mantra which is *astī* '(it) is' or '(it) exists'. In GAv., the verb *ah-* 'to be' is also used for 'to exist',²⁰ as (millennia later) Descartes did in his famous philosophical conclusion 'I think, therefore I am' ~ meaning 'I think, therefore I exist'.

In the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), *astī* '(it) exists', reflects the 'existence' that is *vohu-* and *vahišta-* in lines a. and c., and *uštā* in line b., which in turn are dimensions of the true (correct) order of existence, *aša-*, the centerpiece of this poem.

The ways in which Zarathushtra uses these three words in the Gathas ~ *aša-*, *vahišta-* and *uštā* ~ show an interplay between the human and the Divine ~ an interplay which is echoed in the most ancient commentary on this mantra (Y20.4).²¹

Now if we factor our understanding of these 3 words ~ *aša-*, *vahišta-* and *uštā* ~ into the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) mantra, what does it tell you? It tells me that:

aša- the true (correct) order of existence, is an existence that is wholly good; that we should desire it, choose it; that we can will it into being; that it brings happiness to mortal existence and is the bliss of enlightenment; and that we should choose and personify it for its own sake. It is an existence that is divine, the way to the divine, and the paradise of becoming one with the divine, a joyful, enlightened state of being that is endless light.

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¹ The idea that the cadences of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) are linked to its meaning, is discussed in *Part Five: Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), An Analysis*.

² You may notice that in line a., truth is described as 'good' in both its positive (*vohu-*) and superlative (*vahišta-*) forms. This is typical of a crescendo of expression which is a well established style of syntax in Avestan texts (discussed in more detail in *Part Five: The Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo), An Analysis*). Here are just two examples from the YAv. *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*, in which the author has Ahura Mazda purportedly giving His names (as a way of revealing His nature) using a word first in its positive form, and then in its superlative form, in the same phrase.

... *baēžazya. nqma. ahmi. baēžazyōtəma. nqma. ahmi.*
'...healing by name am I, most-healing by name am I';
... *ašava. nqma. ahmi. ašavastəma. nqma. ahmi.*
'... truthful by name am I, most-truthful by name am I';
Yt. 1.12, my translation; Avestan words from Geldner 2P p. 62.

³ Discussed in *Part One: Good Rule, Vohu Xshathra & Power*.

⁴ This passage in *Visperad 23.1* is discussed in a ft. in *Part Five: Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), Ancient Commentaries*.

⁵ *ašəm* 'truth...' is nominative/accusative sg. of the ntr. noun stem *aša-* but in this context, it can only be nom. sg. because there is no verb here which would support an acc. noun; *ašāi* 'for truth...' is the dative sg. form of the ntr. noun stem *aša-*.

⁶ See in *Part One: Truth, Asha; Good Thinking, Vohu Manah; Embodied Truth, Aramaiti; Good Rule, Vohu Xshathra, & Power; The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu; and The Nature of the Divine*.

⁷ See *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*.

⁸ See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell; and Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*.

⁹ *vahištəm* 'most-good' is nominative sg. ntr. of the adj. stem *vahišta-*. *vahištāi* 'for-(the)-most-good...' is dative. sg. of the adj. stem *vahišta-*. Because dat. sg. *vahištāi* is an adj. which describes dat. sg. *ašāi* 'for truth...' the dat. 'for' in English translation is used only once with the noun *ašāi* 'for truth...' and not twice with the noun and its adj. *vahištāi*. Thus, *ašāi vahištāi* 'for the most good true (correct) order of existence'.

¹⁰ The evidence from the Gathas, showing the multi-dimensioned ways in which 'most good' is used, is detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*.

¹¹ In *Visperad* Ch. 23, § 1 we have the following. Each Avestan line (transliterated from Geldner 2P p. 30), is followed by my translation. Mills' translation of § 1 is a bit free, and does not always follow the Avestan as shown in Geldner, (except in bits and pieces of it).

§ 1. *vahištəm ahurəm mazdqm yazamaide* ∴

The most-good Lord, Wisdom, we worship/celebrate,

vahištəm aməšə spəntā yazamaide ∴

The most-good amesha spenta, we worship/celebrate,

vahištəm narəm ašavanəm yazamaide ∴

The most-good truthful man, we worship/celebrate,

vahištəm ašəm yazamaide ∴

The most-good true (correct) order of existence, we worship/celebrate,

vahišta ciθra yazamaide yā staota yesnya

With the most-good lights, we worship/celebrate, which (are) the praise songs worthy of worship [a reference to the illumination of the Gathas];

vahištqm īštīm [fem. noun] *yazamaide yqm ašahe vahištahe* ∴

The most-good wish we worship/celebrate, that of the Asha Vahishta,

vahištəm ahūm ašaonqm yazamaide raocahəm vīspō.xvāθrəm ∴

The most-good existence of the truthful ones we worship/celebrate, light-filled, all-joyful, [this is a much used description in YAv. texts of what we would call 'heaven']

vahištahe aṅhəuš vahištqm ayanqm yazamaide ∴

The most-good path of the most-good existence, we worship/celebrate.

This beautiful passage from *Visperad* 23.1, its translation and meaning, is discussed in more detail in [Part Three: Heaven & the Absence of Hell in Other Avestan Texts](#). The Avestan notion of 'worship' as a celebration is detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*, and a ft. therein.

¹² In Yy19.6, the most-good existence (*ahu- vahišta-*), the most-good true (correct) order of existence (*aša- vahištā*), and the most-good lights (*vahišta- raocah-*) in their various grammatical forms are equated (as ways of referring to paradise). Here is Mills' translation (which does not follow the Avestan text exactly). Round parentheses are in Mills' translation.

"... I will bring his soul over the Bridge of Chinvat, I who am Ahura Mazda (I will help him to pass over it) to Heaven (the best life) [*vahištəm ahum ... vahištāṭ aṅhaoṭ*], and to Righteousness the Best [*vahištāṭ ašāṭ*], and to the lights of heaven [*vahištaēibyō raocābyō*]." Y19.6, SBE Vol. 31, p. 261; Avestan words transliterated from Geldner, *Avesta*, 1Pt. p. 75.

¹³ As in English, the GAv. word *paourvya-* is used to mean 'first' in many different senses ~ 'first in time', 'first in quality' etc. In this verse Y51.15, I think *paouryō* 'first (one)' means first or foremost in the quality of his being.

¹⁴ Insler thinks that *uštā* is the imperative form of the verb 'to desire, to wish', and also the locative form of a noun 'wish, will', thus "under will". In the Gatha verse Y30.11, he translates *uštā* as "...Wish it so." And

he comments that *uštā* is an imperative verb form. p. 177. In Y51.16 he translates *uštā* as the imperative 'wish ye' ("The Wise Lord is [*spānta-* 'beneficial']. Therefore wish ye [*uštā*] for Him to announce Himself to us." Y51.16). Parenthetically, "to announce Himself to us" means to tell us about His nature (which is the true (correct) order of existence, refracted into its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule ~ the nature of the Divine). In the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) Barthomae translates *uštā* as 'desire' (Taraporewala 1951 p. xxxiii).

¹⁵ Jackson 1892 identifies (YAv.) *uštā* as an interjection, §§ 741 - 742, p. 206. Here in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) *uštā* is translated as an interjection 'happiness' by B. T. Anklesaria, F. K. Dadachanji, Dastur Dhalla, D. J. Irani, Kanga, Juan Mascaro, Mills, and Spiegel (Taraporewala p. xxxiii). Perhaps this translation choice was based on the YAv. *Tir Yasht*, in which *uštā* is an interjection "Happiness!" and is equated with *uštātāt-* ~ a state of blissfulness, blessedness. The linguistics of *uštā* with comparative translations are detailed in *Part Three: The Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), An Analysis*.

¹⁶ Haug, and K. M. Talati (as quoted in Taraporewala 1951 p. xxxiii). The YAv. commentary on the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) explains that the line *uštā asfī uštā ahmāi* describes this state of being *uštātāt-* 'happiness, blessedness', which Humbach says means "ushta-ness, i.e. a benediction". (Vol. 2, p. 11). Mills translates *uštātāt-* in this Younger Avestan commentary as "blessedness" Yy20.2. SBE 31, p. 267. This commentary Yy20 is discussed in *Part Three: The Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) Ancient Commentaries*. The idea that *uštātāt-* is a state of 'happiness, blessedness' is corroborated by one of the meanings of *uštā* which is an interjection 'Happiness!'

¹⁷ Taraporewala 1951 p. 23. He states that *uštā* (in one of its meanings), means more than 'happiness'. It means a state of bliss which is the illumination of the soul in the fulfillment of earthly life. His opinion fits the use of *uštā /uštātāt-* in the *Tir Yasht*, when we consider that the 'waters' and 'plants' in the *Tir Yasht* are material metaphors for completeness *haurvatāt-* and non-deathness *amərətāt-* respectively.

¹⁸ The conclusion, that 'desire it! or 'wish it!' is part of the intended meaning of the first *ushta* in line 2, seems to be corroborated by a passing reference to this manthra Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) in YAv. *Visperad* 23.1

"... Also we sacrifice to [or 'celebrate'] that best wish [*īšīm*], which is that of the Asha Vahishta ..." Mills translation, SBE 31, p. 363; Avestan word from Geldner 2P p. 30.

¹⁹ From *Visperad*, Ch. 23.1; the translation is mine, the Avestan words are from Geldner 2P p. 30. This description of the state of being that is paradise is found in many other YAv. texts as well, see *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*.

²⁰ Here are two examples of the verb *ah* 'to be' translated by Insler as 'to exist'. Many more are given in *Part Three: Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), An Analysis*.

43.6 a: *yahmi spāntā θwā mainyū urvāēsē jasō*
b: *mazdā x šaθrā ahmī vohū manajhā*

"(But) at this very turning point in which I exist [*ahmī*], Thou, the Wise One, hast come into the world with Thy [*spāntā ... mainyū*] (and) with the rule of good thinking,..." Y43.6a-b Insler 1975. Insler comments (in pertinent part) "...Zarathushtra means, on the one hand, *yahmi ... urvāēsē ... ahmī* 'at which turning point I exist (am)' ..." Insler 1975 p. 233. In this context, the English '(I) exist' for *ahmī* more accurately captures Zarathushtra's meaning than '(I) am' would have done.

Y45.6b *yā hudā hənī*

"... Him who is beneficent ... to those who exist [*hənī*]..." Y45.6b, Insler 1975. In the GAv. text, the word *hənī* '(they) are' (3p pl. of the verb *ah-* 'to be') is translated by Insler as 'exist', which more accurately captures Zarathushtra's meaning in this context.

²¹ Discussed in *Part Three: The Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo), Ancient Commentaries*.