A Younger Avestan Blessing.

'In this house

may listening prevail over not-listening

peace (over) strife;

generosity (over) stinginess,

embodied truth (over) disregard (for it);

the straight-spoken word (over) the false-spoken word,

through truth, (may) untruth (be overcome).'

Y60.5, my translation.

vainīṯ ahmi nmāne sraoṣ̌ō asruštīm

āx štiš anāx štīm

rāitiš arāitīm

ārmaitiš tarōmaitīm

aršux δō vāx š miϑaox təm vācim

aṣa drujəm

Y60.5

Geldner 1P p. 210 (line divisions are mine)

A linguistic discussion is footnoted.[1]

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[1] In this blessing, the verb is expressed only in the first sentence, and is implied in each of the phrases that follow. We know this is so because the first word of each phrase is nom. sg. (and therefore the subject of the verb), and each second word is acc. sg. (and therefore the object of the verb), as the list of these words shows (below).

nmāne is loc. sg. of the ntr. YAv. noun *nmāna-* 'house' (GAv. *dəmāna-*), so loc. sg *nmāne* 'in this house'.

ahmi is loc. sg. of the demonstrative pronoun *a-* 'this' (Skjaervo 2006). Loc. sg. *ahmi* belongs with loc. sg. *nmāne*, giving us *ahmi nmāne* 'in this house'; *ahmi* is also the word for 'I am' (1p sg. pres. of the verb *ah-* 'to be', Skjaervo 2006) but in this context, that clearly does not fit.

vainīṯ is the only expressly stated verb, (from the stem *van* 'to prevail over, to overcome'). In Avestan, a verb that is expressed is often subsequently implied in the same paragraph, and that is what we have here; *vainīṯ* is first expressed and then implied throughout the rest of this section. We know this is so because the first word of each subsequenet phrase is nom. sg. (and therefore the subject of an implied verb), and each second word is acc. sg. (and therefore the object of an implied verb), as the list of these words shows (below).

sraoṣ̌ō nom. sg. of masc. of YAv. *sraoṣa-* (GAv. *səraoṣ̌ō* Skjaervo 2006).

asruštīm acc. sg. of fem. *asrušti-* (Skjaervo 2006); the prefix *a-* before a consonant, (or *an-* before a vowel) is a negative prefix.

āx štiš nom. sg. of YAv. *āx šti-*; Skjaervo 2003 shows *āx šti-* fem. 'peace'. For fem *i-* stem words the *-iš* inflection is nom. sg.

anāx štīm acc. sg. of fem. *anāx šti-* 'non-peace' or 'strife'. For fem *i-* stem words the *-īm* inflection is acc. sg.;

rāitiš nom. sg. of fem *rāiti-* 'generosity' (Skjaervo 2003).

arāitīm acc. sg. of fem. *arāiti-* 'non-generosity' or 'stinginess'. For fem *i-* stem words the *-īm* inflection is acc. sg.

ārmaitiš nom. sg. of fem. *ārmaiti-* 'embodied truth'.

tarōmaitīm acc. sg. of fem. *tarōmaiti-* 'disregard (for embodied truth)'. Skjaervo 2003 thinks YAv. *tarōmaiti-* means 'disdain'. In my view, (based on the ways in which GAv. *tarāmaiti-* is used in the Gathas, it means the opposite of *ārmaiti-* 'embodied truth', so perhaps 'disdain, disregard (for embodied truth)'.

aršuxδō vāx š; each word is nom. sg. of its respective stem: *aršuxδa-* [adj.] 'straight-spoken'; and *vāx š* 'word' < *vak- vac-* (Skjaervo 2003); The *š* inflection (*vāx š*) = one of the nom. sg. forms.

miϑaox təm acc. sg. of [adj.] *miϑaox ta-* 'something spoken wrongly' (Skjaervo 2003). The *-əm* inflection = acc. sg. of *-a-* stem words.

vācim acc. sg. of *vac-* 'word', the *-im* inflection = one of the acc. sg. forms;

aša drujəm, Geldner shows *aša.drujəm*. His choice is based on 6 (or 7) mss. which he shows as "J2 K5.15, Jp1, H1, P6, Jm4...". He also shows that mss. Pt4, F2, Mf3, K36, Lb16 have *drujim* only; whereas mss. J9 and H2 have *aša.drujim* Geldner 1P p. 210 ft. 3.

The last word (a compound word) *aša.drujəm* or *aša.drujim* poses a puzzle. There can be no doubt that *drujəm* is acc. sg. of *druj-* (Skjaervo 2006); Jackson 1892 says the acc. sg. of *druj-* is sometimes *drujəm* and sometimes *drujim* (§ 281, p. 82). So regardless of which ms. we choose, *drujəm* or *drujim* is acc. sg. (and therefore the object of the verb).

And there is no dispute that this word *druj-* has been translated as 'the Lie', 'deceit', 'false', 'wrong', 'untruth' etc.

In the Gathas, *aša-* 'truth' and *druj-* are opposites. And *aša-* means more than factual truth. So for an English equivalent for *druj-* in *meaning*, I think 'untruth' is more accurate (following Taraporewala). The supporting evidence for these conclusions is detailed in a ft. in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

So *aša-* 'truth' and *druj-* 'untruth' cannot be part of one compound word in the context of this blessing. If that were so, then the last part of this blessing would have 'truth-untruth' being prevailed over, (or 'truth-lie', or 'truth-deceit', or 'truth-falsehood').

> *aršuxδō vāx š miϑaox təm vācim aša.drujəm*
> 'the straight-spoken word [*aršuxδō vāx š*] (over) the false-spoken word [*miϑaox təm vācim*], (over) truth-false [*aša.drujəm*].'

It simply does not fit the context. So (not surprisingly) many translators think that *aša.drujəm* is a scribal error. Can we puzzle out what the original composer intended? Well, we have three alternatives. You can take your pick.

1. We can adopt the versions in mss. Pt4, F2, Mf3, K36, Lb16 which give the last word as only *drujim*, giving us:

'the straight-spoken word [*aršuxδō vāxš*] (over) the false-spoken word [*miϑaoxtəm vācim*], (over) untruth [*drujim*].'

This first alternative is linguistically defensible. It (more or less) fits the context. And it is the only alternative which works without emending (changing) the text. But it raises some troubling problems:

(i) It lacks the poetic structure of the entire blessing in which each good thing overcomes each bad one;

(ii) The 'straight-spoken word is a narrower concept than *aša-*. It is only a part of *aša-*, and therefore is not the opposite of *drujəm*; whereas all the other couples are opposites.

(iii) And one has to wonder: Why do 6 (or 7) other mss. each add *aša* to *drujəm* as a compound word? Where (for them) did the word (or idea of) *aša* come from?   What could have caused them to add this word to *drujəm* to form a compound? I can think of no answer.

These reasons, (and unanswered questions) make it unlikely (in my view) that the above first alternative is what the original composer of this blessing intended.

2. It is possible that the original composer intended *aš.drujəm* instead of *aša.drujəm*. Skjaervo 2006 shows that *aš.* in the first part of a compound word means 'great', he shows
aš.aojah- 'having great (bodily) strength;
aš.x ratu- 'having great guiding thought (*x ratu-* has been differently translated, see *Part Three: Xratu*).

Thus *aš.drujəm* would mean 'great-falseness', or 'great-deceit', or 'great-untruth'. This alternative also is linguisticaly defensible, and (more or less) fits the context, but it troubles me for reasons (i) and (ii) given under 1. above.

3. The third alternative is that the original composer intended *aša* 'truth' and *drujəm* 'untruth' to be two separate words, instead of one compound word. Truth (*aša-*) and untruth (*druj-*) are foundational opposites. In the Gathas - *aša-* comprises all that is true, good, right, and *druj-* comprises all that is false, wrong, harmful, evil. And truth (in its entirety) overcoming untruth (in its entirety) is a foundational teaching of Zarathushtra's who speaks of delivering untruth (*druj-*) into the hands of truth (*aša-*), in Y30.8 and Y44.14. I therefore think the original composer of this blessing intended both *aša-* and *druj-* to be in opposition in the last line of the blessing.

And it is easy to see how the scribal error of turning these two words into one compound word may have happened. Anyone who has studied the mss. is aware that they often mix up compound words and separate words. The reason (from a scribal point of view) is simple - especially for subsequent copiers. In Avestan script, words are separated by a space, a dot, and another space. If a scribe (to save parchment) made the spaces small, subsequent copiers might easily copy the two separate words as a compound - separated only by a dot, with no spaces. If we take these two words as separate, then *aša* is (YAv.) instr. sg. 'through truth', and *drujəm* is acc. sg. (which requires implying the previously stated verb *van-* in this last line also - which is in accord with a normal feature of Avestan syntax), giving us the concluding line:

Through truth [*aša*], (may) untruth [*drujəm*] (be overcome).'

This is the alternative I find most persuasive. It is linguistically correct. It fits the poetic structure of each line, in which each good thing overcomes its opposite. It forms an inclusive last line, in that truth includes all the foregoing good things, and untruth includes all the foregoing bad things.   And it fits a foundational thought of Zarathushtra's - reflected in this YAv. blessing - that it is through truth, that untruth, is overcome, which forms a fitting conclusion to this blessing. This last idea is developed more under the *Seventh Gem,* in *Part One: Seven Gems From the Later Texts.*