

Yasna 54:1, The A Airyema Ishyo

The *A Airyema Ishyo* is in Old Avestan (as are the Gathas). I offer this mantra for your consideration because it was highly regarded by ancient Zoroastrians in later Avestan texts, and also because it is lovely, in and of itself. I used to think it was simply a mantra of friendship, with a few good words added, but that it did not have the multi-dimensioned ideas we find in the *Ahuna Vairya*, the *Asha Vahishta*, and so many Gatha verses. I was wrong. I now think it fully deserves the extravagant praises given to it in Younger Avestan texts,¹ (although they do not say why they praise it so extravagantly). I now have no doubt that the *A Airyema Ishyo* was composed by Zarathushtra, because it bears the signature of his poetic techniques ~ simple on the surface, with beautiful multi-dimensions that are apparent on further study.

You may object that this verse starts off by asking for support for the [men and women of Zarathushtra](#) ~ referring to him in the 3d person. But actually, there are many Gatha verses in which Zarathushtra also refers to himself in the 3d person. And in the *A Airyema Ishyo* he refers to himself first in the 3d person (line a.), and then in the 1st person (line c.) ~ which is exactly what he does in the last Gatha (Y53 ~ which immediately precedes the *A Airyema Ishyo*). In the first verse (Y53:1) he refers to himself in the 3d person, and in verses 4 and 5 he refers to himself in the 1st person.

But (except for Taraporewala), I am not aware of any scholar who thinks the *A Airyema Ishyo* was composed by Zarathushtra. Taraporewala thinks the *A Airyema Ishyo* was originally the last verse of the last Gatha (Y53). I do not know whether this is so, or whether Zarathushtra composed the *A Airyema Ishyo* as a stand alone piece (like the *Ashem Vohu*, and the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*). There are arguments pro and con. But the evidence (available to me) is simply insufficient for me to form a certain opinion one way or the other. I am inclined to think that Zarathushtra composed it as a stand-alone piece, like the *Ahuna Vairya* and the *Asha Vahishta* (*Ashem Vohu*), because it encapsulates so many important teachings from the entire corpus of the Gathas.

Today the 3 most important Avestan mantras are the *Asha Vahishta* (*Ashem Vohu*), the *Ahuna Vairya* (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*), and the *Yenghe Haatam*.² (The first two are in Old Avestan; the *Yenghe Haatam* is in archaic Younger Avestan). But Moulton 1912 concludes his translation of the Gathas with only three prayers ~ all in Old Avestan ~ the *Asha Vahishta* (*Ashem Vohu*), the *Ahuna Vairya* (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*), and the *A Airyema Ishyo*, which accords with the high regard in which the *A Airyema Ishyo* was held in YAv. texts.

Insler has not translated the *A Airyema Ishyo* (so far as I am aware). The translations and commentaries of the other linguists in our group who have done so are referenced here to avoid repeated citations.³ Here is this Old Avestan verse.

Line a. *ā airyēmā išyō rafədrāi jaṅtū nərəbyascā nāiribyascā zaraḍuštrahē*

Line b. *vaṅhəuš rafədrāi manəṅhō yā daēnā vairīm hanāṭ mīždəm*

Line c. *ašahyā yāsā ašīm yaṃ išyāṃ ahurō masatā mazdā••* Y54:1.⁴

My translation.

- May the dear community come for support, to (the) men and women of Zarathushtra,
- for the support of good thinking, by which envisionment one will gain the chosen prize,
- I ask for the reward of truth, which (is) dear, (which the) Lord Wisdom shall award. Y54:1.

Discussion.

To appreciate the beauty and relevance of these three lines of poetry, we need to recall that in English, 'truth' usually means factual truth. But in Avestan (and throughout the Gathas) *aša-* (which is translated as 'truth')

means more than factual truth; *aša-* means an order that is true (correct), in the existences of matter and mind. It includes factual truths ~ all that is accurate, as well as the truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ all that is right, which in the Gathas, includes such qualities as honesty, generosity, lovingkindness, compassion, friendship, being just (as in being fair), etc.

All the qualities implicit in the meaning of *aša-* have one thing in common ~ goodness. In the Gathas, *aša-* is described as *vahišta-* 'most-good' ~ the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness.⁵ And in later Avestan texts, *aša-* *vahišta* became a standard term.

So we see that *aša-* is an order of existence that is true, correct, right ~ goodness in the superlative degree. As we consider this verse, we need to keep in mind the full meaning of *aša-* when we see its English translation 'truth'.

The A *Airyema Ishyo*, in simple, rather lovely ways, expresses wishes and statements of belief that are at the core of Zarathushtra's teachings, and that I love. Simple ideas that, on further study, disclose his multi-dimensional thought. It touches me that this manthra regards truth as 'dear', 'precious' (just as other Avestan texts describe truth as beautiful). So let us consider this Old Avestan verse at both its obvious, and not so obvious, levels.

At a basic level it asks for the support of the community, for Zarathushtra's followers and for good thinking, and expresses the ideas that good thinking leads to the prize, the reward, which is truth, which prize is awarded by Lord Wisdom. Is that a contradiction ~ that the prize, truth, is given by both good thinking and by the Lord Wisdom? Well no. It is one of Zarathushtra's interesting paradoxes. So let us take a closer look, (bearing in mind that in Avestan script there are no capital letters).

This verse asks not only that the community support Zarathushtra's followers (a practical wish);

It also asks that the community support good thinking. In other words, it asks that the community not blindly accept whatever is told to its members. In the Gathas, good thinking is the incremental comprehension of truth, "[Truth shall I see thee as I continue to acquire ... good thinking ...](#)" Y28:5.⁶ So by asking the community to support good thinking, Zarathushtra asks that it support the (incremental) search for truth ~ one of his foundational teachings.

This verse recognizes that good thinking leads to an existence of truth. Good thinking is the envisionment (a way of looking at things) that will gain the prize ~ truth. In other words, it is through good thinking that the prize ~ truth ~ is gained.

Yet this verse also states that it is wisdom/Wisdom that awards this prize ~ truth. But what is wisdom if not the complete comprehension of truth (good thinking)? So the chosen prize (truth) is reached through good thinking ~ which is ultimately the complete comprehension of truth (which is wisdom/Wisdom).

And what is the complete comprehension of truth (good thinking), if not truth personified? So it is truth personified who gives the reward of good thinking which is the comprehension of truth. In other words, the reward for truth is truth itself as we see throughout the Gathas,⁷ and also in the *Asha Vahishta* (*Ashem Vohu*) manthra. And what is truth personified if not wisdom/Wisdom?

Now why does Zarathushtra express his ideas in such paradoxical, multi-dimensional ways? It is not just to amuse us with a puzzle (although that is certainly a part of his teaching style). I think it is to help us arrive at some of his foundational ideas, for ourselves ~ through 'Eureka!' moments ~ (also a part of his teaching style). This Old Avestan verse, the *ā airyēmā išyō* does exactly that (as do so many Gatha verses). Here are some of Zarathushtra's foundational ideas that it expresses.

1. It expresses a love for truth ~ that truth is dear, precious ~ and shows us that the attainment of truth through good thinking is an incremental process. The more we engage in good thinking, the more clearly (bit by bit) we see truth. And the more we see truth, the more we increase our understanding, the wiser we become. A complementary process ~ in which truth and good thinking are each the means and the end (the path and its reward) ~ ideas which runs throughout the Gathas.⁸

2. And what does this complementary interplay of attaining truth through good thinking tell us about the identity of the Divine? Well, I will give you a clue. Zarathushtra thinks that we mortals have 5 qualities of the Divine incompletely, imperfectly ~ truth (*aša-*), its comprehension good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spanta- ārmaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu- xšaθra-*), the beneficial way of being (*spanta- mainyu-*), and that we are capable of attaining all seven qualities of the Divine completely (*haurvatāt-*), ~ a completeness that renders mortality (the arena for the perfecting process) unnecessary. Therefore when we achieve completeness, we attain a non-mortal state of being (*amərətāt-* 'non-deathness'). So the ultimate good end is truth personified, which is the wholly beneficial way of being (*spanta- mainyu-*) which is wisdom personified.

3. And this little gem of a verse tells us that the **prize** ~ truth ~ is **chosen**. A recognition of the indispensable part that the freedom to choose, and our own efforts, our own commitment, our own choices, in thought, word and action, play in bringing about spiritual evolution to the certain good end ~ truth personified (wisdom/Wisdom).⁹

5. In expressing the idea that the Divine (in being) awards truth, this little verse also expresses one of Zarathushtra's most basic teachings, ~ that of mutual, loving help, between all the living, (each of whom have something of the Divine within), in attaining the ultimate good end ~ truth personified (wisdom/Wisdom).

6. And if the translation of *masatā* as 'shall award' is accurate, the phrase **Lord Wisdom shall award**, echoes the certainty in the preceding phrase (in line b.) ~ **one will gain the chosen prize** ~ both phrases affirming one of Zarathushtra's most unique teachings ~ that the ultimate good end is certain; that truth personified will be attained by every fragment of existence ~ *because* of the freedom to choose.

7. Finally, there is one more idea in this little manthra (there may be many more, but these are the ones I have discovered). In the Gathas, Zarathushtra's most used name for the Divine is *mazdā-* ('Wisdom') alone; next most frequently he uses *ahura-* 'Lord' alone; and least frequently, he uses both names together.¹⁰ So why do you suppose he uses both names *ahurō ... mazdā*, in this verse, the *ā airyēmā išyō*? The reason is clear if we recall how Zarathushtra uses 'Lord' in the Gathas ~ as one who has acquired 'lordship' over the qualities of the Divine,¹¹ all of which are components of (or equated with) truth (*aša-*) ~ its comprehension good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spanta- ārmaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu- xšaθra-*), the beneficial way of being (*spanta- mainyu-*), which Zarathushtra says we can attain completely (*haurvatāt-*). It is 'lordship' over (the complete attainment of) the qualities of the Divine that awards the prize of truth ~ that enables us to become truth personified (wisdom/Wisdom).

Simple on the surface. Profound, beautiful, in its kaleidoscopic ideas. No wonder the later Avestan texts praised this little verse so extravagantly.

In short, the *A Airyema Ishyo* is pure Zarathushtra. It has the hallmarks of his poetic signature, and it expresses important foundational ideas in a nutshell ~ ideas that flow into and out of each other, in his subtle, multi-dimensional ways. I have no doubt at all that he composed this Old Avestan verse.

* * * * *

Let us now consider the linguistics of this verse. But before we do a word by word analysis, it may help you to know a rule of syntax (how words are put together) that appears frequently in the Gathas and in the *Ahuna Vairya*. We have in this verse, 5 instances in which 2 words which go together, frame or encapsulate one or more other words. Thanks to Insler's insight, we now know that this technique is used when Zarathushtra intends the framing and framed words to be taken as one unit of thought.¹² The Gathas are full of instances of such 'framings' or 'encapsulations'. I do not know if this technique also appears in any Avestan text other than those composed by Zarathushtra.

Here is the full verse, in which I show the framing words in red and the framed words in green. As you can see, there are 5 instances of this framing technique. In the word by word analysis, we will see how each of these instances comprises one unit of thought.

Line a. *ā airyāmā išyō rafədrāi jaṇtū nərəbyascā nāiribyascā zaraθuštrahē*
 Line b. *vanhəuš rafədrāi manəhō yā daēnā vairīm hanāṭ mīždəm*
 Line c. *ašahyā yāsā ašīm yaqm išyqm ahurō masatā mazdā•: Y54:1.*

Let us now consider an analysis of the grammatical values and meaning(s) of each word.

Line a. *ā airyāmā išyō rafədrāi jaṇtū nərəbyascā nāiribyascā zaraθuštrahē*
 'May the dear community come for support, to (the) men and women of Zarathushtra',

ā ... jaṇtū 'May [it] come'

ā ... jaṇtū is the 3p sg. aorist imperative form of the verb stem *ā ... gam-* 'to come', Skjaervo 2006. The 3p sg. is a part of the verb form, and refers to the 'community'.

airyāmā 'community'

airyāmā is nom. sg. of the masc. noun stem *airyaman-* Skjaervo 2006, who also says that it means "community", and also "genius of the community". What does Skjaervo mean by "genius" of the community?

Well, in Zarathushtra's ancestral Indo-Iranian culture, important material things were thought to have spiritual essences ~ what Skjaervo (and Darmesteter before him) call the "genius" of the material thing ~ its spiritual essence which was revered, worshipped (even though many of these spiritual essences were thought to have qualities that were a mix of good and bad).¹³ For example, Haoma was both the plant, and the spiritual essence of the plant (Av. *haoma-* Ved. *soma-*) ~ a deity (for want of a better word); Mithra was both the 'contract' (essential for survival in those ancient times) and the spiritual essence of the contract ~ a deity. And *airyaman-* was both the tribe, as well as its spiritual essence ~ the qualities associated with which were healing, lovingkindness, friendship, nobility of mind/heart/spirit ~ perhaps because these were the qualities that Zarathushtra's tribe valued, and thought that a tribe should personify.

So the question arises: In the *A Airyema Ishyo*, who/what was being asked to support the men and women of Zarathushtra ~ the tribe itself? Its spiritual essence? Well, let us see how Zarathushtra uses this word.

In the Gathas, the word *airyaman-* in its various grammatical forms (declensions), appears in more than one verse, as the largest social unit ~ which is what a tribe was in Zarathushtra's ancient culture. And in each instance of its use in the Gathas, the context in which *airyaman-* is used either requires the conclusion that it is a generic word for tribe, or is not inconsistent with that conclusion. These Gatha verses are footnoted here for your convenience, so you can judge for yourself.¹⁴

In addition, in the Gathas, Zarathushtra does not mention by name, any of the Indo-Iranian deities (spiritual essences) of his culture. He refers to them using the generic word for 'deity' (*daēva-*, and in one instance *bagā-*) and he is openly critical of their bad qualities (as represented by their priests) which caused so much suffering in his society.¹⁵ There isn't a single Gatha verse in which such deities are praised, or spoken of with approval ~ let alone worshipped.

So (based on the evidence of the Gathas), *airyaman-* was a generic word for 'tribe'. Therefore (if Zarathushtra composed the A *Airyema Ishyo*) the request for support would not have been to the deity *airyaman-* but to Zarathushtra's tribe.

However I think, with double entendre (a favorite poetic technique of Zarathushtra) he intended the quality of support requested, to be the qualities associated with the spiritual essence of his tribe ~ healing, lovingkindness, friendship, nobility of mind/heart/spirit.

So why have I translated *airyāmā* as 'community' instead of as 'tribe'? Well, in today's English, 'tribe' does not accurately express the meaning of what a 'tribe' was in Old Avestan times. In those ancient times, a tribe was like an extended family ~ essential to survival. In an era when there was no 911, or a social safety net, the members of a tribe (when acting in a good way) collectively watched out for each other ~ protected each other from things that affected survival such as hunting for food together, caring for the injured, and helping each other in calamities of all sorts. Its members also protected each other from attacks by other tribes, and probably collectively attacked other tribes as well. Of course this does not mean that the members of a tribe were never bad to each other or never harmed each other. They were human beings, who could do evil things to each other ~ just as members of a family can do even today. But as a general proposition, to survive, individuals required the mutual assistance of an extended social unit ~ the tribe.

But today, the word 'tribe' has acquired a lot of negative baggage. The idea of an extended family that cares for and protects its members has been lost. Today, 'tribe/tribal' is largely thought of as a state of mind that is prejudiced against people who are 'different'. So to translate *airyāmā išyō* as the 'dear tribe' would evoke an inaccurate mind-set ~ one that is very different from the meanings its ancient composer (in my view Zarathushtra) had in mind. There is no English equivalent that accurately calls to mind the ancient understanding of 'tribe'. The nearest equivalent I can think of is 'community' (also inadequate, but a social unit that can (and does) consist of people who have different racial origins, without the negative baggage of today's 'tribe'). I therefore translate *airyāmā* as 'community'.

Insler 1975: Sensitive perhaps to the negative connotations of 'tribe', Insler consistently translates *airyaman-* words in the Gathas as 'clan'.

Humbach 1991 and *Humbach/Faiss 2010* translate *airyāmā* as 'tribe'.

Taraporewala 1951 and *Moulton 1912* translates *airyāmā* here as "Brotherhood", both thinking that it means believers in Zarathushtra's teachings. But in Gathas verses, the meaning of *airyaman-* is not limited to Zarathushtra's followers. In fact the Indo-Iranians worshipped the spiritual essences of many material things, which was also the situation during Zarathushtra's time period. So the entire *arya* tribe to which he belonged would not all have been his followers (which is why he asks for the tribe's support for his followers).

Bartholomae (in his English translation as shown in *Taraporewala 1951*) leaves the word untranslated as *Airyaman*. But *Taraporewala* comments that *Bartholomae* was of the opinion that *airyāmā* referred to the deity.

išyō 'dear'

According to Skjaervo 2006, *išyō* is nom. sg. of masc. of the stem *išya-* an adj., but he says it means 'to be sped (along)', which does not fit the context, because *išyō* describes nom. sg. masc. *airyāmā*. In Avestan, as in English, a given word may often have two (or more) unrelated meanings.

Other linguists show the following meaning(s) which fit the context of the *išya-* words in lines a. and c. of our verse (Y54:1).

Reichert 1911, in his Avestan Glossary shows *išya-* an adj. which means 'desired, welcome, dear'.

Humbach 1991 and Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate *išyō* as 'provided with invigoration' (they are much given to translating other Old Avestan words as 'invigoration' (in their various forms) as well. But they provide no linguistic explanation for their choice (which, with respect, I do not find persuasive).

Taraporewala 1951, without comment, translates it in line a. as 'the-much-desired'.

Moulton 1912 translates it as 'dear' in lines a. and c.

Bartholomae translates it as 'dear' in line a. and as 'desired' in line c.

In Avestan, all stems are conjectured (based on how they are inflected for case, number and gender), and for *išyō* in line a. and *išyam* in line c., linguists are not in agreement that the stem is *išya-* (not just for this verse Y54:1, but also as these words appear (in these or other grammatical forms in other Gatha verses ~ words which have been variously (and inconsistently) translated. I have footnoted them here for your convenience).¹⁶

I think 'dear' is the closest meaning for an adj. that describes *airyāmā*, because it is a quality that is associated with the spiritual essence of the tribe. Dhalla states the Indo-Iranian divinity 'Airyaman' originally conveyed the idea of comradeship, that his "standing epithet is 'beloved one', and in the YAv. texts, he is a healer."¹⁷ (Taraporewala 1951 also comments that *airyaman-* means 'friend').

Here, (in the A Airyema Ishyo) the adj. *išyō* 'dear' reflects this central feature of the spiritual essence of the tribe as being beloved, a friend (and therefore dear).

rafədrāi 'for support'

rafədrāi is dat. sg. (to/for ___) of the ntr. noun stem *rafədra-* 'support' Skjaervo 2006;

Insler 1975, Humbach 1991, Humbach/Faiss 2010, and Moulton 1912 also translates *rafədra-* words as 'support' both here, and in Gatha verses in which *rafədra-* words appear (although Insler has not translated the A Airyema Ishyo).

Bartholomae: According to Taraporewala (commenting under Y28:1, which also has a *rafədra-* word) Bartholomae translates *rafədra-* words as 'help, support' (although Taraporewala shows Bartholomae's English translation of *rafədrāi* in our verse (Y54:1) as 'to protect').

Taraporewala 1951 himself in our verse (Y54:1) translates *rafədrāi* as "for-(our)-rejoicing" without linguistic comment here, but explains under Y28:1 that he follows Neriosangh's translation of this word. In Y28:1 (in which *rafədra-* appears in a different declension) he translates it as "Perfect Bliss" commenting that the meanings ascribed to the word by Bartholomae ("help or support"), and Andreas ('to elevate, to raise up') are not supported by any cognates, and "seem to be pure guess work". He suggests that the Skt. *rabh-* 'to desire vehemently' is the nearest cognate, and believes that the meaning of *rafədra-* "would then be 'the thing one desires most', 'our ultimate desire', i.e. 'Perfect Bliss'". With respect, I do not find his translations persuasive because they are not (in my view) a good fit contextually ~ neither in the Gatha verses that have *rafədra-* words, nor here.

I therefore translate the dat. sg. *rafədrāi* as 'for support'. Which brings us to the encapsulation technique.

In line a. the two parts of the verb *ā jaṇtū* encapsulate the 3 words we have just discussed, showing one unit of thought.

Literally, *ā airyāmā išyō rafədrāi jaṇtū* 'may (the) dear community, for support, come ...'
Or in more fluent English, 'may (the) dear community come, for support ...'

nərəbyascā nāiribyascā zaraθuštrahē 'to (the) men and women of Zarathushtra';

Both words *nərəbyascā* and *nāiribyascā* are dat. pl (to/for ___) of the stem words *nar-* 'man', and *nāirī-* 'woman' respectively, Skjaervo 2006; thus 'to (the) men and women'

zaraθuštrahē is genitive sg. of the name stem *zaraθuštra-* Skjaervo 2006, thus, 'of Zarathushtra';

Giving us:

Line a. *ā airyāmā išyō rafədrāi jaṇtū nərəbyascā nāiribyascā zaraθuštrahē*

'May the dear community come for support, to (the) men and women of Zarathushtra',

* * *

Line b. *vaṇhəuš rafədrāi manəḥō yā daēnā vairīm hanāt mīždam*

Line b. for the support of good thinking, through which envisionment one shall gain the chosen prize,

vaṇhəuš rafədrāi manəḥō 'for (the) support of good thinking'

vaṇhəuš ... manəḥō are both gen. sg. (of____) of the respective ntr. stems *vohu-* (an adj.) and *manah-* (a noun). So these two words, *manəḥō* (the noun) and its adjective *vaṇhəuš* belong together.

In Avestan, an adj. must be in the same case/number/gender as the noun it describes. Thus if we translated these 2 gen. sg. words literally, we would have 'of good of thinking'. But in English 'of' is used only once.

And these two words - the adjective *vaṇhəuš* and its noun *manəḥō* encapsulate or frame the word *rafədrāi* (discussed above) which is dat. sg. (to/for _____) of the noun stem *rafədra-* 'support'.

These three words (the framing and the framed) create a unit of thought:

vaṇhəuš rafədrāi manəḥō 'for (the) support of good thinking'.

yā 'through which'

yā is instr. sg. (with/by/through ___) of the relative pronoun stem- *ya-*.

daēnā 'envisionment'

daēnā is nom. sg. of the fem. stem *daēnā-* (Skjaervo 2006); *daēnā-* means 'envisionment' as a mental perception, a way of looking at things,¹⁸ which here, and in the Gathas, is good thinking - the comprehension of truth.

Thus, *vaṇhəuš rafədrāi manəḥō yā daēnā*

'for (the) support of good thinking, through which envisionment'

vairīm hanāt mīždam 'one shall gain (the) chosen prize,'

hanāt, according to Skjaervo 2006 is 3p sg. aorist subjunctive of the verb stem *han-* 'to gain'.

vairīm is an adj. which describes the noun *mīždam*. So these 2 words belong together;

vairīm is the nom./acc. sg. ntr. form of the adj. stem *vairya-*, which derives from *var-* 'to choose (to be)' Skjaervo 2006.

mīždam is the nom./acc. sg. form of the ntr. noun stem *mīžda-* Skjaervo 2006;

Here both these acc. sg. ntr. words are the direct objects of the verb *hanāt* 'one shall gain'.

However, linguists differ about the flavor of meanings to be ascribed to these three words.

For *vairīm*:

Skjaervo 2006 (in his Old Avestan Glossary) shows the stem *vairya-* as an adj. deriving from the stem *var-* 'to choose (to be)'. For *vairya-* he gives the translation options, 'choice, worthy, well-deserved'; and he shows *vairīm* as its nom./acc. sg. ntr. form.

Humbach 1991, and Humbach/Faiss 2010, without explanation, prefer 'desirable';

Taraporewala 1951 (without explanation), Moulton 1912 and Bartholomae translate *vairīm* as 'precious'.

With respect, except for Skjaervo, none of the foregoing translation options for *vairīm* accurately express the meaning of its genesis, *var-* 'to choose'.

Insler in the *Ahuna Vairya* phrase *yāθā. ahū. vairyō* translates *vairyō* as "chosen", (Skjaervo 2006 shows that *vairyō* is nom. sg. masc. of *vairya-* ~ the same nom. sg. declension as *vairīm* except for its grammatical gender, because the ntr. form of this adj. (*vairīm*) describes the ntr. noun *mīždam*).

I therefore think Insler's translation "chosen" (in the *Ahuna Vairya*) is the most accurate translation option for *vairīm* in our verse ~ it fits both linguistically, and in the context in which *vairīm* is used.

For *mīždam*:

Skjaervo 2006 shows *mīždam* as nom./acc. sg. of the ntr. noun stem *mīžda-*. In this context both *vairīm* and *mīždam* can only be acc. ~ because this adj. and its noun are the objects of the verb *hanāt* 'one shall gain'.

Insler 1975 consistently translates (the grammatical forms of) *mīžda-* words as 'prize', in the many Gatha verses in which *mīžda-* words appear.

In our verse Humbach 1991 and Humbach/Faiss 2010 also translate *mīždam* as 'prize'.

Skjaervo 2006 (who tends to choose ritualistic translation options) says *mīžda-* means 'fee'. There is nothing wrong with a ritual fee. They are necessary things. But in this verse, *mīždam* is generated by the envisionment that is good thinking (line b.) and is equated with truth (line c.). A ritual fee simply does not fit the context. Taraporewala 1951, Moulton 1912, and Bartholomae translate *mīždam* as 'reward', (which is another way of saying 'prize').

In Old Avestan the fem. noun *aši-* is 'reward'. I prefer to translate as literally as possible in order to get the flavor of Zarathushtra's thought as accurately as possible. So here, I prefer Insler's translation 'prize' for *mīždam* which is a good fit (linguistically and contextually).

And the three words *vairīm hanāt mīždam* comprises one unit of thought 'one will gain (the) chosen prize.'

Thus *yā daēnā vairīm hanāt mīždam* 'through which envisionment [*yā daēnā*], one will gain [*hanāt*] (the) chosen prize [*vairīm ... mīždam*].'

* * *

Line c. *ašahyā yāsā ašīm yqm išyqm ahurō masatā mazdā*

I ask for the reward of truth, which (is) dear, (which the) Lord Wisdom shall award.

yāsā 'I ask for'

yāsā is 1p sg. indicative (present) of the verb stem *yā-* 'to implore, beseech, ask for' Skjaervo 2006. The first person 'I' is part of the verb form.

ašīm '(the) reward'

ašīm is acc. sg. of the fem. noun stem *aši-* 'reward' Skjaervo 2006;

Insler 1975, Humbach 1991 and Humbach/Faiss 2010 also translate *ašīm* as 'reward'.

Taraporewala 1951 translates *ašm* as "for-the-blessing" but (with respect) *ašm* is not the form for a dat. declension (to/for ___), nor does he give any explanation for his translation choice. The translations of Moulton 1912 and Bartholomae are too free for me to be certain which English word(s) they use for *ašm*, other than 'Destiny', which I do not find persuasive ~ neither linguistically nor in this context.

ašahyā 'of truth'

ašahyā is gen. sg. of the ntr. noun *aša-* in Old Avestan Skjaervo 2006 (the YAv. form is *ašahē*). The various ways in which linguists have translated *aša-* is detailed in another chapter.¹⁹ Just a reminder. In Old Avestan, *aša-* means not only factual truths (what is factually accurate, correct), but also the truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ all that is right, good (correct in that sense).

yqm 'which (is)'

yqm is the acc. sg. fem. form of the relative pronoun stem *ya-* Jackson 1892 § 399, p. 114; as such it relates to acc. sg. fem. *ašm* 'reward'.

In Avestan, various forms (conjugations) of the verb 'to be' often are implied, which is why I have an implied '(is)' ~ placing it in round parenthesis to show that the word is not in the Avestan text.

išyqm 'dear'

išyqm is the acc. sg. fem. form of the adj. stem *išya-* Skjaervo 2006. As an adj. it's case, gender and number have to match the case, gender and number of the relative pronoun it describes, which here is the acc. sg. fem. *yqm* which stands for fem. *ašm* 'reward'.

At first thought, it may seem that *išyqm* cannot belong with *ašm* 'reward', because *ašahyā ... ašm* '(the) reward of truth frames or encapsulates *yāsā* 'I ask for, giving us a unit of thought *ašahyā yāsā ašm* 'I ask for (the) reward of truth', whereas acc. sg. fem. *išyqm* 'dear' follows acc. sg. fem. *yqm* and appear immediately before the name of the Divine ~ giving us *yqm išyqm ahurō ... mazdā* 'which (the) dear Lord Wisdom'

So do *yqm išyqm* belong with *ahurō ... mazdā*? Well, no, because acc. sg. fem. *yqm išyqm* cannot belong with nom. sg. masc. *ahurō ... mazdā*. We therefore know it belongs with the preceding acc. sg. fem. *ašm*. Thus:

ašahyā yāsā ašm yqm išyqm 'I ask for the reward of truth which (is) dear,'

ahurō masatā mazdā '(which the) Lord Wisdom shall award'.

As you can see, I have implied the words '(which the)' before the words 'Lord Wisdom'. In Avestan syntax, a word that is previously expressed, often is later implied. Here, the relative pronoun *yqm* 'which' has been previously expressed and is now implied before the words *ahurō ... mazdā* '(which the) Lord Wisdom'. In Avestan, there are no articles 'the' or 'a/an'. But to make an English translation fluent, such articles have to be implied.

ahurō ... mazdā 'Lord Wisdom'

ahurō is nom. sg. of the masc. stem *ahura-*

mazdā Skjaervo 2006 shows this word as nom. masc. of the stem *mazdā-*, ~ he does not say nom. sg. ~ just nom. An earlier generation of scholars thought the stem was *mazdāh-* (a fem. noun ~ the grammatical gender of its Ved. cognate *mēdhas-*). More recently, many linguists classify it as masc. even though Thieme himself (Insler's teacher) shows its its Vedic cognate as fem. *mēdhas-*.²⁰ But this difference of opinion is not relevant here. *mazdā* is also the form for gen. (of___), but that grammatical value does not fit this context.

masatā 'shall award'

This is an Avestan word about which linguists have diverse views, so it has not yet been decoded with certainty.

Skjaervo 2006 thinks that perhaps *masatā* is 3p sg. middle voice, of the verb stem "*masa-?* *meet out (?)" The question marks are his, indicating uncertainty both as to the stem and its meaning. His Old Avestan (2006) Glossary offers no further opinions regarding the conjugation (tense, mood) of this verb form *masatā*. His (tentative) definition " *meet out (?)" is another way of saying 'award'.

Humbach 1991 translates *masatā* as a verb "has devised". He offers no comment or explanation. I do not think the context supports this translation, because while one may 'devise' different kinds of rewards, one cannot 'devise' truth (which here is the reward).

Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate *masatā* as "will be delighted", with no comment or explanation. But to make their translation fit, they add in round parentheses an additional verb that is not in the Av. text, which they think is implied and which is necessary to fit the preceding 'request'; specifically "I request the invigorating reward of truth which (to accord) the Wise Lord will be delighted". Absent any explanation, I cannot judge the validity of the translation. But contextually I do not find this translation persuasive.

Taraporewala 1951 translates *masatā* as a verb 'has meant (for us)'. His comments show the uncertainty surrounding the translation of both the grammatical value and meaning of this verb form by other linguists. Although he comments that Bartholomae thinks *masatā* means 'has apportioned', Taraporewala shows Bartholomae's English translation of *masatā* (in this verse) as 'shall award'.

Moulton 1912 has an interesting idea on *masatā*. Although in his translation of this verse, he translates *masatā* as 'bestowed', he asks in a footnote: "Could we read *mastā* (with two or three MSS.), as an aorist of *man-* 'thought of'? *ašī-* is thus creature of Mazda's Thought." Following that line of thought, his translation would be "for this one I beg the dear Destiny that Ahura Mazda thought of". Moulton's view is interesting indeed, but (with respect) the idea that Ahura Mazda "thought of" the reward (or Destiny) which here is truth implies that the Lord Wisdom could have thought of any one of a number of Destinies, which does not fit the micro context of this verse, nor the macro context of the Gathas as a whole (in my view).

Based on the context, I follow Bartholomae's translation on the meaning and grammatical value of *masatā* as a 3p sg. verb form 'shall award', for 2 reasons:

1. Because the preceding words ask for the dear reward of truth, so it fits contextually that the Lord Wisdom shall award this requested reward; and (even more important)
2. The translation 'shall award' echoes the certainty in the preceding line b. 'one will gain the chosen prize' and reflects Zarathushtra's teaching that the good end is a certainty (because of the freedom to choose!).

* * * * *

Here is the entire verse, in my translations, and in translations by those in our group of linguists who have translated this verse (Insler has not, so far as I am aware). In each translation, I have inserted the line designations so that you can more easily compare these different translations with the GAv. text.

- a. *ā airyēmā išyō rafədrāi jaṅtū nərəbyascā nāiribyascā zaraθuštrahē*
- b. *vaṅhəuš rafədrāi manəḥhō yā daēnā vairīm hanāt mīzdəm*
- c. *ašahyā yāsā ašīm yqm išyqm ahurō masatā mazdā•: Y54:1. Geldner 1P p. 191.*

My translation.

- a. May the dear community come for support, to (the) men and women of Zarathushtra,
- b. for the support of good thinking, by which envisionment one will gain the chosen prize,
- c. I ask for the reward of truth, which (is) dear, (which the) Lord Wisdom shall award. Y54:1.

Humbach 1991,

- a. Let the tribe, provided with invigoration, come to the support of the men and women of Zarathushtra,
- b. to the support of good thought, a religious view which will deserve a desirable prize.
- c. I entreat for the invigorating reward of truth which the Wise Ahura has devised. Y54:1.

Humbach/Faiss 2010,

- a. Let the tribe, provided with invigorations come to the support of the men and women of Zarathushtra,
- b. to the support of good thought by the view/religion by which one will win a desirable prize.
- c. I request the invigorating reward of truth, which (to accord) the Wise Lord will be delighted. Y54:1.

Taraporewala 1951,

- a. May the-much-desired Brotherhood come hither for-(our)-rejoicing,
- b. for-the-men and for-the-maidens of Zarathushtra ~ for-the-fulfilment of Vohu Mano;
- c. whosoever's Inner-Self earns the precious reward, I-will-pray to Asha for-the-blessing, which greatly-to-be-desired, Ahura Mazda hath-meant (for us). Y54:1.

Bartholomae,

- a. May the dear Airyaman come hither to protect the men and women of Zarathushtra,
- bc. to protect the Good Mind. Whichever Self earns the precious reward to him I offer the prize of righteousness, (which is) to be desired, which Ahura Mazda shall award. Y54:1.

Moulton 1912,

- a. Let the dear Brotherhood come for support of Zarathushtra's men and women,
- bc. for support of Good Thought. Whatever Self may win the precious meed of Right, for this one I beg the dear Destiny that Ahura Mazda bestowed. Y54:1.

* * * * *

¹ Here are 2 examples of extravagant praise for the A *Airyema Ishyo* in YAv. texts.

In the YAv. Havan Gah § 6, it is rather extravagantly described as follows ~ the 'victory' mentioned being the victory of good over evil.

"... the Airyema-ishyo [*airyamanəm išīm*], ... the powerful, victoriously smiting [*vərəθrayənm*], that which no hate can reach, which overwhelms all torments with victory, which is the uppermost, and the middle, and the foremost, for the effective invocation of that surpassing Mathra, the five Gathas." Havan Gah § 6, Mills translation, SBE 31, p. 380; Avestan word transliterated from Geldner 2P p. 52.

Parenthetically, does this passage see the A *Airyema Ishyo* as part of the "surpassing Mathra, the five Gathas"? Difficult to say for sure. But it does indeed encapsulate the teachings of the Gathas.

The Yashts are in YAv. but the priests who chanted them during Pahlavi times, gave each of them a Pahlavi title. And in the Ardibehest (Pahlavi for *aša vahišta*) Yasht, in a part of § 5 the composer describes (what in English is called) the A *Airyema Ishyo*, as follows (there are no capital letters in Av. script):

... (the) *Airyaman*, most-great of mathras, *aīryamanəm mąθranəm mazištəm*,

(the) most-good of mathras, *mąθranəm vahištəm*

most-beautiful of mathras, the very most beautiful of mathras

mąθranəm sraēštəm mąθranəm sraēštōtəməm

strong one of mathras, the strongest of mathras
mąθranąm uyrəm mąθranąm uyrōtaməm

(the) high one of mathras, the highest one of mathras
mąθranąm bərəzrəm mąθranąm bərəzrōtaməm

(the) victorious one of mathras, the most-victorious one of mathras,
mąθranąm vārəθrayni mąθranąm vārəθraynyōtaməm

(the) healing one of mathras, the most healing one of mathras.
mąθranąm baēšazəm mąθranąm baēšazyōtaməm••

my translation. Avestan words transliterated from Geldner 2P p. 74.

Notice here again, the Av. superlative degree is used to express a crescendo of expression (just as in the *Ashem Vohu*, and also in the *Horməzd Yasht*), rather than a difference in kind. Darmesteter's translation of this section appears in SBE 23, pp. 43 - 44. He footnotes that the "Airyaman prayer" refers to "The prayer known as the Airyama-Ishyo..." p. 43, ft. 4. But he translates *mąθra*- words as "spells". But Insler 1975 has commented that *mąθra*- is almost always used in the Gathas, in the sense of the word of the deity, ~ a sacred formulation, precept, promise (the promised Word), instruction, teaching (detailed in a ft. in *Part One: Manthra, An Introduction*).

² Detailed in chapters in *Parts One* and *Three*.

³ Humbach 1991 Vol. 1, p. 195 for the translation; and Vol. 2 p. 248 for his commentary.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 p. 162 for their translation; they offer no commentary on the *A Airyema Ishyo* Y54:1.

Taraporewala 1951 pp. 858 - 860 for his translation and commentary.

Bartholomae's translation in English appears at Tarap. 1951 p. 860

Moulton 1912, p. 390 for his translation and footnote.

Skjaervo 2006 refers to his Old Avesta Glossary in his on-line *Old Avestan Primer* at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~iranian/OldAvestan/index.html> If Skjaervo has translated the *A Airyema Ishyo* I am not aware of it and do not have a copy.

⁴ Geldner 1P, p. 191.

⁵ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

⁶ Detailed in *Part One: The Search For Truth*; and *Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*.

⁷ Detailed in *Part Two: A Question Of Reward & The Path*.

⁸ Detailed in *Part Two: A Question Of Reward & The Path*.

⁹ Detailed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

¹⁰ Detailed in *Part Three: Evolution Of The Name(s) Ahura, Mazda*.

¹¹ Detailed with quotations from the Gathas in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*, (under the subtitle *ahura*-).

¹² This technique of 'framing' or 'encapsulation' in the Gathas' syntax, to give one unit of thought, is discussed in the following chapters:

In *Part Three: The Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo) An Analysis* (discussed in great detail, with Insler's insight referenced, and with many examples); and

In *Part Six: Yasna 28:5* (discussed in some detail); *Yasna 30:7* (which has a double framing ~ one within another); *Yasna 32:7* and *Yasna 51:9* (in which the framing extends over the ceasura); *Yasna 28:1* (discussed briefly); *Yasna 32:9* (discussed briefly); *Yasna 44:16* (discussed briefly).

I do not know if this 'framing' or 'encapsulation' technique appears in other Avestan texts. If it does not, then the multiple framings in the *A Airyema Ishyo* would be a strong argument in favor of Zarathushtra being the composer of this verse. But if this 'framing' technique does appear in other Avestan texts, then it would have been a rule of Avestan syntax, not simply a signature of Zarathushtra's poetry.

¹³ Detailed in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*.

¹⁴ In the Gathas, *airyaman-* in its various declensions, appears in more than one verse. Insler 1975 translates *airyaman-* words as 'clan'. In some verses *airyaman-* is the largest of a series of social units ~ which is what a 'tribe' is. None of these verses use *airyaman-* in a context that is inconsistent with its being a generic word for tribe. Here are the Gatha verses (all in the Insler 1975 translation) in which *airyaman-* appears in its various declensions.

"... The person who is very good to the truthful man, be he allied by family [*x'aētū*], or a member of his community [*vərəzənyō*], or allied by clan [*airyamnā*], Lord, or be he someone who continues to serve the cow with zeal, such a person shall be on the pasture of truth and good thinking." Y33:3 Insler 1975. (The "cow" is an allegory for the beneficial-sacred in mortal existence). Here *airyamanā* is the largest of a series of social units, and appears to be a generic word for 'tribe' because in this context it is not limited to one tribe and therefore could not be the name of a tribe.

"Wise One, (it is) I who, through worship, shall turn away disobedience [*asruštm* 'not-listening'] and bad thinking from Thee, and opposition from the family [*x'aētūšcā*], and the nearest deceit of the community [*vərəzənahyācā*], and scorners from the clan [*airyamanascā*], and the worst counselor from the pasture of the cow." Y33:4, Insler 1975. The "pasture of the cow" is the "pasture of truth and good thinking" referred to in the immediately preceding verse. Here again, *airyamanascā* is the largest of a series of social units, and its use is consistent with a generic word for 'tribe'. Insler 1975 translates *asruštm* as 'disobedience' but it literally means 'not-listening' ~ the opposite of *səraoša-* 'listening'. See *Part Three: Seraoša*, for a more detailed discussion .

"... they exclude me from my family [*x'aētūš*] and from my clan [*airyamanascā*]. The community [*vərəzənā*] with which I have associated has not satisfied me ..." Y46:1, Insler 1975. Here again, *airyamanascā* is a larger social unit than family, and the context requires that *airyamanascā* is a generic word for 'tribe' because Zarathushtra speaks of being excluded from this social unit ~ which is not the same as naming a tribe.

"... Which clan [*airyamā*], which family [*x'aētūš*] shall abide by Thy laws, thus being one which shall give good fame to the (whole) community [*vərəzənāi*]?" Y49:7, Insler 1975. Here the social units are not described in a progression from the smallest (or largest) to its opposite. But 'which [*airyamā*]' cannot be the name of a tribe. The context requires that *airyamā* is a generic word for 'tribe'.

¹⁵ Detailed in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*.

¹⁶ Skjaervo 2006 shows the stem *išya-* which he thinks means 'to be sped (along)', with all its grammatical forms (declensions) and where they appear in Old Avestan texts as follows.

išyō nom. sg. masc. Y54:1 (our verse line a.);
išyāng acc. pl. masc. Y32:16;
išyqm acc. sg. fem. Y51:17, Y54:1 (our verse line c.);
išyā nom./acc. pl. ntr. Y48:8.

But no ancient grammars of Avestan have survived. And in decoding Avestan, linguists conjecture the stem of a word, based on its grammatical form. So all Avestan stems are conjectured, and not all linguists agree that the above grammatical forms belong with the stem *išya-*. Here are the Gatha verses in which these word forms appear. You can see (from the diversity of views) that eminent linguists are in disagreement about meaning of a given word form

and its a (conjectured) stem. So essentially, *išyō* in our verse (Y54:1) is an Avestan word that has not yet been decoded.

Y32:16 *išyāng*

Insler 1975 "... if I am to capture the deceitful for their harm against the worthy [*išyāng*]." Y32:16. Here, the adj. *išyāng* which Insler translates as 'worthy' is used as an acc. pl. noun ~ '(those who are) worthy'. He does not give a linguistic comment on the meaning of *išyāng*.

Humbach 1991 "...those provided with invigorations [*išyāng*]." Y32:16. He thinks *išyāng* derives from *iš-* which he says means 'vigor, invigoration', but offers no linguistic explanation in his paragraphs (6) through (9) on how he arrived at the meaning of *išyāng* as 'invigorations' (in this or other Old Avestan verses). He simply explains that this phrase "refers to the sacrificial fee expected by Zarathushtra." Vol. 2, p. 91, but offers no evidence in support of that interpretation.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 "...which ... (is) in sight following behind the invigorating." Y32:16, p. 95.

Taraporewala 1951 "... (Thy) devotees [*išyāng*] ..." Y32:16; p. 303; he comments that *išyāng* is accusative pl., and means "Beloved, friend." He says that Bartholomae takes the word to mean "friends (i.e. adherents) of Z." (As you can see, 'adherents' is an interpretative narrowing of the meaning). But Taraporewala says "I would like to take the word in the sense of 'lovers' or 'devotees' of Ahura." p. 306 (also a narrowing interpretation).

Moulton 1912 and Bartholomae translate *išyāng* as "... my friends." Y32:16. The word "my" is not in the Avestan text of this verse.

Y48:8 *išyā*

Insler 1975 "... is to be sent by truth to those who are certainly sincere [*ašā ākā aradrāng išyā*] ...", Y48:8 without any explanation of *išyā*.

Humbach 1991 in his comment (6) translates the phrase *ākā aradrāng išyā* in Y48:8 as "vigorous [or: provided with invigorations] in the face of the zestful," Y48:8. He comments that the stem *išya-* derives from *iš-* which means 'vigour, invigoration', but does not explain how he arrived at this meaning. Vol. 2, p. 202.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 "... what (is) yours through truth, invigorating [*išiyā* ?] in presence of the efficient ones..." Y48:4 They seem to emend *išyā* to *išiyā* (without an asterisk showing an emendation, and supported by no mss. in Geldner 1P p. 170) and offering no comment or explanation on its spelling or meaning (it is possible that *išiyā* is a typographical error).

Taraporewala 1951, Moulton 1912 and Bartholomae translate *išyā* in this verse as "welcome". Taraporewala comments that it means "desirable, welcome", but with no linguistic explanation.

Y51:17 *išyqm*

Insler 1975 "... let the Ruler the Wise Lord [*x šayqs mazdā ahurō*] grant power [*išyqm*] to him..." Y51:17. Here, commenting on the meaning of *išyqm* as 'power', Insler quotes Y28:7, "...Grant power [*išəm*] to Vishtaspa and to me ..."; commenting under Y28:7, he says that both *iš-* and *išti-* allow the consistent translation 'power' throughout the Gathas (pp. 127 - 128).

Humbach 1991 "... Let the Wise Ahura who weilds power [*x šayqs*] make it vigorous [*išyqm*] for him ..." Y51:17. He offers no comment on how he arrived at the meaning of *išyqm* as 'vigorous'. Vol. 2, pp. 232 - 233.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 "...Let the Wise Lord, ... make it vigorous [*išiyqm* ?] for him ..." Here again, they spell the word differently, offering no comment on its meaning or spelling, nor indicating an emendation with an asterisk.

Taraporewala 1951 translates *išyqm* in this verse as "much-desired" without comment.

Moulton 1912 and Bartholomae translates *išyqm* as "dear".

¹⁷ Dhalla 1963 *History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 203 - 204.

¹⁸ Detailed in *Part Three: Daena*.

¹⁹ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

²⁰ Thieme, *Reflections on the Vocabulary of Zarathushtra's Gathas*, in *Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium, 1993* (WZO, 1998), p. 201.

