The Celebrated Seven.

I have a lot of good stuff to show you. But to keep things simple, I have put some of it in footnotes. I concluded the last Session with the question:

> If you had to capture the whole of Zarathushtra's spiritual philosophy in one sound byte, what, in your view, would it be?

Obviously, there are many 'right' answers. So let us celebrate our diversity, and look at your ideas, in the order in which I received them.

Your ideas.

Darius Captain said:
"To me the essence of Zarathustra's teachings in one sentence is:
Use your good mind to determine what is right and wrong and act accordingly."
That's a good one ! It captures many key ideas ~ the search for truth, choice, that we do not reject the mind to achieve spirituality.

Artemis Javanshir said:
"My answer would be: Communal laughter which would result from communal joy."
I love that ! It captures that Zarathushtra's teachings are joyful, life affirming, that we do not withdraw from life to achieve spirituality, we engage it; and Zarathushtra's idea of 'communal' is the fellowship of all the living.

Esfandiar Bandari said:
"Be happy, make others happy, and leave the world a better place," adding that "Zoroastrianism's 3 commandments ~ positive thought, words, and deeds ~ are succinct, memorable, and comprehensive. They apply both internally and externally."
Very insightful. I love the emphasis on making others happy, and that our good thoughts, words and actions are of both internal and external benefit.

Dolat Bolandi said:
"My sound byte would be: The doorway to joyful living".
That is so beautiful ! And so very true. It captures not only that Zarathushtra's teachings are joyful, but also that we evolve spiritually by living life, not by withdraw from life.

As you can see, all these opinions pertain to living our lives. And that indeed is the focus of Zarathushtra's teachings.

I would like to add to these opinions and insights by showing you a few sound bytes from Zarathushtra and other ancient teachers of the religion, which provide us with a framework for living our lives. But, most surprising of all is the one sound byte with which he answers questions that have puzzled the mind of man for millennia. Questions such as:

How does 'God' and the rest of us fit into the picture of existence ?

What is the purpose of life; how is it fulfilled ?

What is 'salvation' ? How are we 'saved' ? From what are we saved?

What is the way to worship ?

What path should we follow, what is its reward ?

How are 'good' and 'evil' defined ?

It is a mark of Zarathushtra's genius that with *one* word, *one* concept, which he refracts into 7, the way a beam of light is refracted by a prism into the colors of the rainbow,[1] ~ he encapsulates every core element of his spiritual philosophy ~ giving us a blue-print for living our lives, and also answering each of these questions.

Are you skeptical?   *One* word?   Well, let's start with the 7 (later called amesha spenta) and then see what is the *one* word, the *one* concept, of which the rest are refractions.   Linguists differ about the meanings of these 7 concepts. But the following are linguistically sound, and they also fit *all* of the ways (contexts) in which Zarathushtra uses these words. These 7 concepts, qualities, are:[2]

1. The beneficial[3] way of being (*spenta- mainyu-*), which is,

2. The true (correct), wholly good order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*), 'truth' for short,

3. Its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu- manah-*),

4. Its beneficial embodiment in thought, word, and action (*spenta- aramaiti-*),

5. Its good rule, (*vohu- xshathra-*), starting with ruling one's self,

6. Its complete attainment (*haurvatat-*), and the resulting

7. Non--deathness (*ameretat-*),   a state of being not bound by mortality.

Now if we look carefully at these 7 concepts, we can see that all of them are either aspects of, or equated with, one concept ~ the true, wholly good, order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*) ~ 'truth' for short.

The first quality ~ a beneficial way of being (*spenta- mainyu-*) ~ is equated with truth.[4]

The other qualities are aspects of truth ~ its comprehension (# 3); its embodiment (# 4); its rule (# 5); its complete attainment (# 6);   and the resulting state of being that is not bound by mortality (# 7).   And this conclusion ~ that all these qualities are aspects of truth (*asha-*) ~ is corroborated by later Avestan texts, which (more than once) describe these 7 qualities as,

> " ... the truthful ones [*ashavan-*]. The seven, who think alike, the seven who speak alike, the seven who act alike. Who have the same thought, the same word, the same deed ..." *Zamyad Yasht* Yt. 19, §§ 15 - 16, Hintze translation 1994.

So if these 7 are all truth-possessing (*ashavan-*),[5] and if they are all alike, they can only be either equated with, or components of, 'truth' (*asha-*).

Which makes us appreciate how important it is to understand what Zarathushtra has in mind, when he uses this word.

The linguistics of *asha-* (which I have footnoted),[6] show that *asha-* is an order of existence that is inherently true. So Insler and other linguists have translated *asha-* as 'truth'. Its meaning includes factual truths as well as the truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ all that is right, good.[7] In the Gathas, this includes such qualities as honesty, generosity, friendship, compassion, justice (as in being fair), and other good qualities ~ one of which, today, we have forgotten.   Love is also included in the meaning *asha-*.   And love pervades every aspect of Zarathushtra's teachings.[8]   To give you just one example, loving is the word he uses to describe a person who is beneficial (*spenta-*) through truth (*asha-*), a world-healer, and Wisdom's ally.

> "... the loving man [*kathe* 'loving (one)']
> ... such a person, [*spenta-* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha-*],
> watching over the heritage for all,
> is a world-healer [*ahum.bish* '(an) existence-healer']
> and Thy ally in [*mainyu-* '(his) way of being'], [*mazda-* 'Wisdom']..."
> Gathas, Yasna 44, verse 2, Insler translation 1975.

There is no word 'man' in the Avestan text of this verse.

In fact, so well known was the central role that love plays in Zarathushtra's teachings, that it survived even the massive loss of knowledge that followed the Arab invasion of Iran, ~ even though surviving Zoroastrians may not have remembered that love is part of the meaning of *asha-*; and even though in those later times, the idea of 'love' had shrunk to include only human beings, whereas in the Gathas, it includes existence as a whole. Despite these limitations, this notion of 'love' being a central feature of Wisdom's teachings is beautifully expressed in certain later texts.   For example, a Pahlavi text says,

> "... The law of Ohrmazd is love of people." *Dinkard* 6, § E45h, Shaul Shaked translation.[9]   Pahlavi "Ohrmazd" is Avestan "Ahura Mazda".

> "... Character is love of people, and the fruit of character is love of people. The love of people is freedom from sin; for it is impossible (to imagine) that the demons should cause harm in the world owing to the action of a certain man, and that man should be a lover of people." *Dinkard* 6, § E45e, Shaul Shaked translation.[10]   [Parenthetically the 'demons' are the demons within ~ our vices].[11]

In the same way, the *Ashirwad* part of the Pazand Zoroastrian Wedding Ceremony says (in part),

> "...worship God by doing charitable works. ..."

> "...The law of the Wise Lord, the Omnipotent, ... is the law of loving mankind. So do not harm people neither in thought nor word nor deed. When a stranger arrives, give him food and shelter. Protect good people from hunger and thirst, from cold and heat. Be kindly to those under you or younger than you. Respect your elders, ... so that the Wise Lord will delight in you." *Ashirwad,* translation by Shahin Bekhradnia.

In short, we do not have an English equivalent ~ not in one word, not even in one phrase ~ which conveys the full meaning of *asha-*.   But 'truth' is the closest so long as we remember that it includes factual truths, as well as the truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ all that is good, right, beneficial, loving. Which brings us to the question:

How do we know what is 'truth' in a given situation?   As Darius Captain so rightly says, we use our good minds,[12] to search for truth, on-going.

Let us now see how this one concept, *asha-* 'truth' (refracted into 7 qualities) encapsulates Zarathushtra's entire spiritual philosophy.[13]

The Divine, and mortals.

In past Sessions we have seen that in the Gathas, truth and its refractions comprise the nature of the Divine (who personifies completely, the true wholly good order of existence, (*asha- vahishta-*) ~ which is the 'beneficial way of being *spenta- mainyu-*);   and that mortals have the first five of these divine qualities (imperfectly), and are capable of attaining them all 7 completely.   I have footnoted some quotations from the Gathas, which show these conclusions.[14]

The way to worship, the path and its reward.[15]

In Sessions 3 and 4 we saw that Zarathushtra tells us to worship the Divine with its own 7 qualities.[16]   And he tells us that the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path, are also these 7 qualities of the Divine, which he distills into one concept,

"... the path(s) of truth..." (Gathas Y51:13;   Y33:5 Insler 1975), which of necessity includes its comprehension, the 'path(s) of good thinking' (Gathas Y51:16, Y34:12 and 13, Insler 1975); Corroborated in later Avestan texts in one of my favorite sound bytes.

'(There is) one path,   that of truth,   all others (are) non-paths.'
aevo pantau   yo ashahe   vispe anyaesham apantam.[17]
my translation.

And this path of truth leads to the reward, ˜ the paradise ˜ of an enlightened state of being ˜ joyful, wholly good, the complete personification of truth (which is wisdom!).

In short: the path of truth ˜ truth for truth's own sake ˜ leads to the attainment, the personification, of truth.

The purpose of life, and how it is fulfilled

The purpose is for all the living to grow, evolve, spiritually, from a state of being that is a mix of divine qualities and their opposites, to one that is completely good, one that personifies truth (*asha-*) completely. And how is this brought about?   Through *asha-*, an order of existence which includes the law of consequences (that we reap what we sow), as well as unearned calamities, unearned good happenings, and mutual, loving help, to see us through our difficult experiences ˜ earned and unearned ˜ which help us to grow, evolve, spiritually.   In the Gathas, reaping what we sow is not for punishment, it is for increasing understanding, and eventually for enlightenment.[18] We covered this, with evidence from the Gathas, in Session 5.

Salvation.[19]

In Zarathushtra's thought, 'salvation' is not being saved from damnation in a hell of tortures. Salvation is being saved from untruth ˜ from what is false, wrong. Salvation is attaining completely, truth, its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule, the beneficial way of being ˜ the celebrated 7. Here are a few examples. Zarathushtra says,

"... let that salvation of yours be granted to us: truth allied with good thinking ! ..." Gathas, Y51:20, Insler 1975,[20]

"... salvation for the truthful, ..." Gathas, Y30:11, Insler 1975;

"... let salvation be granted to the beneficent man ..." Gathas, Y34:3, Insler 1975. Beneficence means a bountiful, generosity springing from goodness, lovingkindness (qualities that are part of the truths of mind/heart/spirit ˜ *asha-* ˜ the beneficial way of being).

But in Zarathushtra's thought, it is not enough for us to save ourselves. We have to help each other make it (without interfering with anyone's freedom to choose).   He says,

"Yes, those ...[21] shall be the saviors [*saoshyant-*] of the lands, namely, those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching with actions in harmony with good thinking and truth, [*mazda-* 'Wisdom']. These indeed have been fated to be the expellers of fury. " Gathas, Y48:12 Insler1975.

Fury, anger, rage (YAv. *aeshma-*, Pahl. *khashm*) is the name of one of the high ranking demons in later texts, in which the names of demons are human vices. These demons are the demons within us ~ our own vices.

Which brings us to how 'good' and 'evil' are defined.

Good & Evil

The only 'evils' described in the Gathas, are the products of choices that are intrinsically wrongful,[22] ~ lies, enmity, harming, injuring, hatred, cruelty, predatory violence, bondage, deceit, theft, corruption, murder, tyranny, etc. So each time we choose evil, in a thought, a word, an action, we bring evil to life, we give it substance, we make it real. This Gatha idea was remembered even in (some) Pahlavi texts.[23]

And the same is true of 'goodness'. Each time we choose what is 'good', in a thought, a word, an action, we bring goodness to life, we give it substance, we make it real. But more than that: Each time we choose goodness, we bring the Divine to life ~ in our world and in ourselves ~ because Zarathushtra equates goodness with the true (correct, right) order of existence ~ an existence that is wholly good (*asha- vahishta-*) which the Divine personifies.[24]

But don't take my word for it. Look at the *adjectives* he uses to describe the 7 qualities of the Divine.

1. The beneficial way of being (*spenta- mainyu-*), which is,

2. The true (correct), wholly good order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*), "truth" for short,

3. Its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu- manah-*),

4. Its beneficial embodiment in thought, word, and action (*spenta- aramaiti-*),

5. Its good rule, (*vohu- xshathra-*), starting with one's self,

6. Its complete attainment (*haurvatat-*), and the resulting state of,

7. Non-deathness (*ameretat-*), a state of being not bound by mortality.

Each of these adjectives, is some aspect of goodness (which explains why ancient Zoroastrians called the religion *din-i behi* 'the religion of goodness'). And this brings us to a well known sound byte).

How do we personify the comprehension, the embodiment, the rule, of truth. We can only do so with thoughts, words and actions. So if each of these 7 qualities is 'good', we can see where the maxim 'good thoughts, good words, good actions', came from.

There are those who brush off this maxim as 'just ethics' ~ not really a 'religion'. But thoughts, words, and actions are the way we personify something. And in Zarathushtra's thought, the personification of truth ~ a most good order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*), comprises the Divine, the way to worship, salvation, the purpose of life and its fulfillment, the path, and the ultimate Good End, paradise ~ a wholly good existence, a truth-filled state of being.

We do not know who invented this little maxim. We do know that it was invented, close to Zarathushtra's time, because it first appears ~ in that form ~ in an early text, the *Yasna Haptanghaiti* which is in Old Avestan, the same form of Avestan in which the Gathas are composed, although this text is not a part of the Gathas. It says,

> 'We are praisers in song ~ not deriders ~
> of good thoughts, of good words, of good actions,
> here and elsewhere,

of (those that) are being produced,
and of (those that) have been produced.
Through effort, in taking a stand,
we are of the good'.
Yasna Haptanghaiti, 35:2, my translation.[25]

Later Avestan texts celebrate this little maxim ~ not only as an affirmation of religious belief (as in the *Jasame Avanghe Mazda* prayer),[26] but also as both the path to paradise, and paradise itself (as a later Avestan text states). In the Gathas, paradise is a state of being, and in the following Avestan text, the term that Darmesteter translates as 'Paradise' is *ahu- vahishta-* 'most good existence'. This later Avestan text (using the metaphor of steps) shows not only how we attain paradise, but also the nature of paradise as a state of being ~ *ahu- vahishta-* '(the) most-good existence' of good thoughts, words and actions ~ in mortal existence. It says,

"The first step ... placed him in the Good-Thought Paradise (*ahu- vahishta-*),
The second step ... placed him in the Good-Word Paradise (*ahu- vahishta-*),
The third step ... placed him in the Good-Deed Paradise (*ahu- vahishta-*),
The fourth step ... placed him in the Endless Lights."
Avestan Fragment # 22, § 15, Darmesteter translation.[27]

The Endless Lights is an enlightened existence that is 'self-made' *xvadhata-*.[28]
And in the Pahlavi text *Bundahishn,* the Divine is named 'Endless Light'.[29]

Indeed, so well known was this idea of paradise as a state of being ~ (the) most good existence of good thoughts, good words, good actions ~ that it was remembered even after the Arab invasion in which so much knowledge was destroyed. A Pazand text says,

"And heaven (*vahesht*),[30] *is* first Humat (good thoughts), and second Hukht (good words), and third Hvaresht (good deeds)." *Mainyo i khard,* Ch. 7 §§ 8 - 12, E. W. West translation, p. 140.

In short, in the Gathas, truth and good are equated. So this little sound byte ~ good thoughts, good words, good actions ~ distills the essence of truth personified ~ which is the Divine, the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path. (As Esfandiar said "succinct, memorable, comprehensive". Right on!).

Shahriar Shariari once commented (in an internet posting), that the qualities of the Divine (amesha spenta) are the operating software for the hardware of existence. A most insightful and accurate comment.

I would like to conclude with a sound byte from the Gathas that is one of my favorites. In the last Gatha, Zarathushtra gives the following advice to the brides and grooms who were then getting married. But this is good advice for all our relationships. True, sometimes relationships don't work, despite our best intentions and efforts. But this is general advice. He says,

"... Let each of you try to win the other with truth [*asha-*] for this shall be of good gain for each ..." Gathas, Y53:5, Insler 1975.

What does this tell us?

First, it tells us that each one ~ both the man and the woman ~ should make the same effort to win the love and respect of the other (gender equality !). A mutually beneficial relationship ~ not a relationship in which one person is subservient to, and exists for the benefit of, the other ~ as though having less intrinsic value.

Second, he tells us to try to win each other with truth (*asha-*). When we are truthful with each other, when we don't tell lies, it builds trust. And we should also try to win each other with the truths of

mind/heart/spirit, ⸗ with all that is good, right, ⸗ lovingkindness, generosity, compassion, friendship, being fair, not injuring, not harming, and all the other qualities included within the meaning of *asha⸗*.

Perhaps you have noticed in your own life experiences, when you are good towards another person, it often ⸗ not always, but often ⸗ generates a corresponding reaction from that person.

Third, he says that if we try to win each other with truth, both parties will gain. One of the many good gains, of winning each other with truth, is happiness. In the very next verse, he says

"...happiness has been lost to the deceitful who violate truth [*asha⸗*]..." Gathas, Y53:6, Insler 1975.

(As Artemis and Dolat both said), Zarathushtra's path of truth is a joyful, life affirming, path.[31] We see this throughout the Gathas.   For example, he says

" ... those attainments befitting truth [*asha⸗*] through which one might set Thy supporters in happiness." Gathas, Y28:2, Insler 1975.

"Do Thou grant the most happy alliance of truth [*asha⸗*] to Frashaoshtra ... and to me..." Gathas, Y49:8, Insler 1975.

"... let wisdom come in the company of truth [*asha⸗*] across the earth! ... with visible help, ... through which he might set us in happiness." Gathas, Y50: 5, Insler 1975.

This idea ⸗ that Wisdom's path of truth is a joyful one ⸗ was well remembered throughout the later Avestan texts. Here are 2 examples.   The very first *Yasna* (which is in Younger Avestan, and therefore much later than the Gathas) says,

"... Ahura Mazda ... sends his joy-creating grace afar ..." Yy1:1, Mills' translation.[32]

The Younger Avestan *Visperad* says,
'With happiness, we celebrate the Lord, Wisdom;
With happiness, we celebrate (what is) beneficial (*spente*), undying (*ameshe*);
With happiness, we celebrate the truthful man;   ...
And in a state of happiness we celebrate every truthful living being, now existing, and (who) will come into being in the future;' *Visperad* 18:1 - 2, my translation.

Does that mean that if we follow Zarathushtra's teachings we will never be unhappy?   Of course not.   In fact, our difficult experiences are among the experiences necessary for spiritual evolution.[33]

What his teachings do, is provide a framework for living that is not manipulative, fear based, control based. His framework for living requires us to be friends, be truthful with each other, be good to each other, watch out for each other ⸗ not just Zoroastrians, not even just humans, but all the living, our earth (our universe(s)!).   In short, his teachings help us to create an environment that allows happiness to bloom.

We are fond of saying 'Happiness to him who gives happiness to others'.   And that may be true.   But Zarathushtra takes us a step futher. He tells us to be truthful for truth's own sake.   So we should spread the blessings of truth (*asha⸗*) throughout existence ⸗ without thought of any return.   We should, with our good thoughts, words, and actions, bring whatever happiness we can, to all the lives we touch ⸗ human and other life forms ⸗ without thought of any return.   I can do no better than to end with Zarathushtra's own beautiful words.

"Therefore, may we be those who shall heal this world ..." Gathas Y30:9, Insler 1975.

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[1] I am indebted to Moulton for this analogy.

[2] Other translations of the Avestan words for these 7 qualities, are given in the following chapters; as well as how these words are used in the Gathas (which throw light on their meanings):
In *Part One*.
The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu;
Truth, Asha;
Good Thinking, Vohu Manah;
Embodied Truth; Aramaiti;
Good Rule, Vohu Xshathra & Power; and
Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat.

[3] The English word 'beneficial' is an inadequate translation of *spenta-*, which in the Gathas is used with additional flavors of meaning -- a loving, reasoning, bountiful, generous, beneficial, goodness (which is the true order of existence), detailed in *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu.*

[4] We know that the first quality -- the beneficial way of being (*spenta- mainyu-*) -- *is* the true (correct), wholly good order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*) because Zarathushtra says so, many times, in many ways, including some mirrored equations.   For example,

spenta- through *asha-*
"... the [*mainyu-* 'way of being'] [*spenta-* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha-*]..." Gathas, Y28:1, Insler 1975;
"... such a person, [*spenta-* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha-*]..." Gathas, Y44:2, Insler 1975.

asha- through *spenta-*
"... those who are properly truthful [*ashavan-*] from this [*spenta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] ... " Gathas, Y47:4, Insler 1975.

And the equivalence between *asha-* and *spenta-* and *vohu-/vahishta-* is corroborated in later Avestan texts. For example, the *Yasna Haptanghaiti* says,

'ashem at vahishtem yazamaide,	"Truth then (which is) most good, we celebrate'
hyat sraeshtem,	which (is) most beautiful,
hyat spentem ameshem,	which (is) beneficial, non-dying,
hyat raochonghvat,	which (is) light-filled,
hyat vispa vohu'.	which (is) all good;' *Yasna Haptanghaiti,* 37:4, my translation.

In the much later (Younger Avestan) *Hormezd Yasht,* Yt. 1:22, *asha-* 'truth' is also described as *spenta* 'beneficial'.
'... *ashem vahishtem sraeshtem ameshem spentem yazamaide ...*"
"... we celebrate truth [*ashem*] -- most good [*vahishtem*],   most beautiful [*sraeshtem*], undying [*ameshem*], beneficial [*spentem*], ... " *Hormezd Yasht,* Yt. 1:22, my translation; Avestan words are from Geldner's *Avesta*, Part 2, p. 65.

In both these quotations, the last word (*yazamaide*) is a verb.   And all the other words are in the accusative case, indicating that they all are objects of the verb.   The words *amesha-* and *spenta-* are adjectives (Skjaervo 2006) which here describe 'truth'. In Av. adjectives can also be used as nouns that are concepts, and nouns that are beings (detailed in *Part Three: Ashavan & Dregvant*). Here (in this part of the *Hormezd Yasht,* as in the quotation from HYapt 37:4 above), *ameshem* and *spentem* are part of a string of adjectives (*vahishtem* 'most good',   *sraeshtem* 'most beautiful') which describe *ashem* 'truth'. So in this context I think *ameshem* and *spentem* are also used as adjectives. But even if (for the sake of argument) we translate the adj. *spentem* as a noun, it is still equated with *ashem,* giving us,

"... we celebrate truth [the true order of existence] -- most good, most beautiful -- (an) undying beneficial (one), ..."

Avestan has no punctuation marks such as dashes (--), or commas.

Indeed, the collective term *amesha- spenta-* shows that *spenta-* is equated with *asha-*, because each of the 7 concepts included in that collective term is *spenta-* 'beneficial'. And all of them are aspects of (or equated with) *asha-*. Parenthetically, the translation of *yazamaide* as 'we celebrate' is discussed in a ft. in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of Worship*.

[5] *asha-* is a noun; *ashavan-* is the adjective for *asha-*, and is generally translated as 'truthful'. But more literally 'truth-possessing'. The *-van* suffix is used to express possession, in the sense of having something ~ possessing, but not owning (ownership suggests exclusivity). In Zarathushtra's thought, the search for truth and its acquisition is for everyone, and it is incremental, on-going ~ a search from which he does not exempt himself. So even he does not claim to have all the answers (or 'own truth').   I think therefore a more accurate, literal, translation for *ashavan-* is 'truth-possessing' (which in fluent English sometimes requires the translation 'truthful', 'truth-filled').

[6] Av. *asha-* is Vedic *rta-*, Old Persian *arta-*, each of which Insler says derive from the root *ar-* the original meaning of which is 'what fits or what's ordered (in a system)'. And Insler says that this root *ar-* has generated such Avestan words as *arezhva-* and *arshtat-* both meaning 'honesty, righteousness', and *erezu-* 'straight, true, right, honest'. So we see (from the words it has generated) that the meaning of the root *ar-* is a fittingness, or an order of existence that intrinsically is true, correct, right, good. Insler's comments are in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra* (1989 - 90), No. 2, pg. 12, ft. 1, which may be viewed on Shahriar Shahriari's website www.zarathushtra.com.

[7] Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha.*   In the Gathas, *asha-* is used as the opposite of *druj-* the meaning of the latter includes what is factually false, as well as all that is bad/wrong (*aka-*), harmful (*angra-*). Linguists (including Insler) often translate *druj-* as 'deceit', but that is only one aspect of its meaning. An English equivalent that most accurately captures the meaning of *druj-* (although not a literal translation) is 'untruth' ~ factual untruths, as well as the untruths of mind/heart/spirit. That *druj-* is the opposite of *asha-* is detailed in a footnote in *Part One: The Houses Of Paradise & Hell,* and also in *Part Three: Ashavan & Dregvant.*

[8] Detailed in *Part One: Love.*   In addition, there is a Table in *Part One: Truth, Asha,* which shows how (in Gatha verses) the notion of love is interwoven with other qualities of the true order of existence, *asha-* ~ in the Divine and in man.

[9] Shaul Shaked 1979, *Wisdom of the Sassanian Sages,* p 215;   and a similar statement is made in § 114, p. 47.

[10] Shaul Shaked 1979, *Wisdom of the Sassanian Sages,* p. 215.
The Pahlavi word that Shaked translates as 'love' in this section, is *dostih, dost,* etc., which in Hindi means 'friendship/friend'. I do not know Pahlavi, and so cannot offer an opinion on whether in these passages *dostih* and *dost* etc. should be translated as 'friendship/friend' rather than 'love'.   In the Gathas, 'friendship/friend' is a central quality ~ it is the way in which Zarathushtra describes the relationship between man and the Divine. And if we think about it, being 'friendly' is simply an aspect of being 'loving'.   And indeed, Zarathushtra describes a person who makes correct choices -- not as 'just';   not even as 'righteous'; but as 'beneficent', ("... the beneficent [*hudah-*] have correctly chosen ..." Gathas, Y30:3, Insler 1975. "Beneficence" means a bountiful, generosity, springing from goodness, lovingkindness.

[11] Detailed in *Part One: Does The Devil Exist?*

[12] Zarathushtra uses 'mind' for more than intellectual faculties. The ways in which he uses *manah-* 'mind' in the Gathas includes the full spectrum of our conscious (awake) faculties ~ intellectual, emotional, creative, insightful, et cetera, detailed in *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah.*

[13] Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of The Amesha Spenta.*

[14] Here are just a few examples from the Gathas, which show the first 5 of these qualities, (a) as concepts, (b) as qualities of the Divine and (c) as qualities of mortals; and that the 6th and 7th are divine qualities which man is capable of attaining. Many more examples are given in the chapters listed in the first footnote (above).

1. The beneficial way of being (*spenta- mainyu-*),

As a concept: "...the [*mainyu-* 'way of being'] [*spenta-* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha-*] ..." Gathas, 28:1, Insler 1975.

In the Divine:
"...Him who is beneficent through His [*spenta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] to those who exist..." Gathas, Y45:6, Insler 1975;
"...Thy [*spenta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being']..." Gathas, Y43:6, Insler 1975.

In mortals:
"... those who are properly truthful [*ashavan-*] from this [*spenta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] ..." Gathas, Y47:4, Insler 1975;
"...by the action of the [*spenta-* 'beneficial'] man whose soul is in alliance with truth [*asha-*],..." Gathas, Y34:2; Insler 1975;
"The priest who is [*erezush* 'straight'] in harmony with truth, is the offspring from [*mainyu- vahishta-* '(a) most-good way of being'] ..." Gathas, Y33:6, Insler 1975.

2. The true order of existence (*asha-*), "truth' for short,

As a concept:
"... those attainments befitting truth ..." Gathas, Y28:2, Insler 1975;
"... I shall look in quest of truth ... " Gathas, Y28:4, Insler 1975;
"... the [*mainyu- spenishta-* 'most beneficial way of being] chose the truth ..." Gathas, Y30:5, Insler 1975;
"... fame is to serve Thee and the truth, [*mazda-* 'Wisdom'] ..." Y32: 6, Insler 1975.

In the Divine:
"...the Lord who art of the same temperament with [*asha- vahishta-* 'truth most-good']..." Gathas, Y28:8, Insler 1975; also Gathas Y29:7, Insler 1975;
"... the truthful Lord ..." Gathas, Y46:9, Insler 1975.

In mortals:
"... the truthful person [*ashavan-*]." Gathas, Y30:4, Insler 1975 (and numerous other verses);
"... the creatures of truth, ..." Gathas, Y31:1, (fewer times), Insler 1975.

3. The comprehension of truth, good thinking (*vohu- manah-*),

As a concept
"... the attainments of good thinking ..." Gathas, Y28:7, Insler 1975;
"... the pasture of truth and good thinking ..." Gathas, Y33:3, Insler 1975.

In the Divine:
"... for the very Wise Master [*ahura-*] of good thinking... " Gathas, Y30:1, Insler 1975;
"...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohu- manah-*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Gathas, Y43:16, Insler 1975.

In mortals:
"... as I continue to acquire ... good thinking, ..." Gathas, Y28:5, Insler 1975;
"... uplift myself with good thinking ..." Gathas, Y28:4, Insler 1975;
"... a whole lifetime of good thinking ..." Gathas, Y28:8, Insler 1975.

4. The embodiment of truth in thought, word, and action (*aramaiti-*),

As a concept
"... May there be [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth'] under the rule of Him ..." Gathas, Y43:16, Insler 1975.

In the Divine:
"...[*mazda* 'Wisdom] in rule is Lord through [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth']." Gathas, Y47:1, Insler 1975;

" [*mazda-* 'Wisdom'] who is the Mightiest Lord, and [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth'], and truth [*asha-*] which prospers the creatures, and good thinking [*manah- vohu-*], and (good) rule [*xshathra-*] - listen to me, [*merezhdata moi* 'give compassion to me']..." Gathas, Y33:11, Insler 1975. 10

Here Wisdom is addressed, with 5 of Its divine qualities in allegorical form ~ one of which is *aramaiti-*.

In mortals:
"[*spenta-* 'beneficial'] is the man of [*aramaiti* 'embodied truth']. He is so by reason of his understanding, his words, his actions, his conception [*daena-* 'envisionment']..." Gathas, Y51: 21, Insler 1975;

"By his action stemming from good thinking, a [*huxratush* 'a good-reasoning (person)'] has expressed his understanding and his [*spenta aramaiti-* 'beneficial embodied truth']..." Gathas, Y34: 10, Insler 1975;

"...that man, [*mazda-* 'Wisdom'], ... who has allied his [*daena-* 'envisionment'] with good thinking. Any such person of [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth'] is of the (same) good lineage with truth [*asha-*]... " Gathas, Y49:5, Insler 1975.   A poetic way of saying that a person who comprehends and embodies truth, belongs to the tribe of truth. (In a tribal society, such as Zarathushtra's a person's lineage showed to which tribe, sub-tribe, clan, family, the person belonged. Zarathushtra expanded the notion of 'belonging' from a tribal one to a universal one ~ the lineage with truth [*asha-*]).

Ambiguous:

"Rise up to me, Lord. Along with Thy [*spenishta- mainyu- mazda-* 'most beneficial way of being, Wisdom'] receive force through [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth'], ... powerful might through truth [*asha-*], protection through ... good thinking [*vohu- manah-*]." Gathas, Y33:12, Insler 1975.

Here, it is ambiguous whether truth, its embodiment, and its comprehension, are concepts, or qualities of the Divine, or qualities of mortals that increase the Divine.   I am inclined to think it is all three, giving this verse a multi-dimensioned quality, which may be why it was valued so highly by the ancients, that it is quoted in the later *Atash Nyaish.*

And what do you make of "... receive ... protection through ... good thinking [*vohu- manah-*]." ? How is the Divine protected through the comprehension of truth?   Think about that for a moment (... or 2 ... or 3 ...).

It is mini-puzzles of this kind that must have delighted the ancient Iranians who (in the absence of electronic forms of entertainment) loved puzzles, mind games, riddles, etc. as the Shahnamah and YAv. texts also demonstrate. For example, the riddles Zal was asked to solve in the Shahnamah. And in the YAv. Aban Yasht, a fellow called Yoishta asks for help in solving the "ninety-nine hard riddles" that his adversary "asks me maliciously" SBE 23, pp 72 - 73 ~ one of my favorite requests for help in that Yasht.

5. Truth's good rule, (*vohu- xshathra-*), over one's self, our social units, our relationships with all existence,

In concept
"That good rule must be chosen ..." Gathas, Y51: 1, Insler 1975.

In the Divine:
"... the most happy alliance of truth ... that alliance which exists under Thy good rule ... " Gathas, Y49: 8, Insler 1975;
"... By your rule [*xshathra-*], Lord, Thou shalt truly heal this world [*ahum* 'existence'] in accord with our wish." Gathas, Y34: 15, Insler 1975. Here again, the Lord (who is Wisdom), is not a tribal deity. His rule (of truth) heals existence ~ the world.

In mortals:
"... the beneficent man ... He serves truth, during his rule, with good word and good action..." Gathas, Y31: 22, Insler 1975;
"... One chooses that rule of good thinking allied with truth in order to serve..." Gathas, Y51: 18, Insler 1975.

6. Completeness (*haurvatat-*), ~ attaining truth completely, wholly, and the resulting
7. Non~deathness (*ameretat-*),   a state of being not bound by mortality

As concepts
"... Grant Thou to me [*ameretat- 'non-deathness'] and completeness ..." Gathas, Y51: 7, Insler 1975;

"... they shall grant completeness and [*ameretat-* 'non-deathness'] to Him ..." Gathas, Y47: 1, Insler 1975.

In the Divine
"... His completeness and [*ameretat-* 'non-deathness'] ..." Gathas, Y31: 6, Insler 1975.

Mortals are capable of attaining these last 2 divine qualities
"... How shall I win through truth ... a prize which is to inspire completeness and [*ameretat-* 'non-deathness'] in me,..." Gathas, Y44: 18, Insler 1975;

"... Those of you who shall give [*seraosha-* 'listening'] and regard ... they shall reach completeness and [*ameretat-* 'non-deathness'] ..." Gathas, Y45: 5, Insler 1975.

[15] Discussed in Sessions 2 and 3, and further detailed:
In *Part One: Worship & Prayer,* and
In *Part Two*:
The Puzzle of Worship; and
A *Question Of Reward & The Path* (one of my favorite chapters).

[16] Here are a few quotations which highlight that we worship the Divine with Its own qualities.

"...[*mazda-* 'Wisdom'], I shall serve ... you ... with truth [*asha-*]..." Gathas, Y50:8, Insler 1975;

"I who shall serve ... you, [*mazda- ahura-* 'Wisdom, Lord,'] , with good thinking [*vohu- manah-*] ..." Gathas, Y28:2, Insler 1975;

"I shall try to glorify Him for us with prayers of [*aramaiti-* 'embodied truth']..." Gathas, Y45:10, Insler 1975;
(prayers of *aramaiti-* are prayers of thoughts, words and actions that embody truth in our day to day lives);

"Yes, praising, I shall always worship ... you, [*mazda- ahura-* 'Wisdom, Lord'], with truth and the very best thinking and with their rule [*xshathra-*]..." Gathas, Y50:4, Insler 1975;

"...Your enduring worshipful offering has been established to be [*ameretat-* 'non-deathness'] and completeness [*haurvatat-*]." Gathas, Y33:8, Insler 1975. (Here, our own self realization is the form of worship the Divine wants).

[17] Yasna 72, § 11; *Visperad* Ch. 24, § 3; and the concluding colophon in Post Avestan *Videvdat/Vendidad.*

[18] Detailed in:
Part One: A Friendly Universe; and
Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution (which contains quotations from the Gathas which show that the law of consequences is delivered through Wisdom's good thinking and Its beneficial way of being, to bring about satisfaction and a good end for everyone ~ for those who choose correctly and (eventually) for those who choose wrongfully as well. It therefore cannot be delivered for punishment. In the Gathas, goodness and truth are equated. So if the law of consequences brings about a good end for everyone, it can only bring about the enlightenment of truth. The idea of 'punishment' as a way of dealing with wrongdoing is alien to Zarathushtra's thought, although many eminent linguists have (inconsistently) translated certain Avestan words as 'punishment', 'retribution', etc. ~ ideas that are alien to his spiritual paradigm (detailed in *Part Three: Adverse Consequences, Not Punishment.*

[19] Detailed in *Part One: A Question Of Salvation.*

[20] Insler adds words to this part of Y51:20, which he thinks are implied.
"... let that salvation of yours be granted to us: truth allied with good thinking ! (We shall offer) words allied with [*ārmaitiš*]..." The words Insler has added ~ "(We shall offer)" are not in the Avestan text, and he does not give *ārmaitiš* its actual grammatical value ~ he gives it an instrumental value ("allied with"), whereas the grammatical value of *ārmaitiš* is nominative (Skjaervo 2006). I translate this verse (more literally) as follows,

'All (you) of the same temperament, that salvation of yours, let it be given to us ⁓
the true order of existence (*aṣ̌əm*) through good thinking, words through which embodied truth [*ārmaitiš̌*] (exists),
the worship of Wisdom, with reverence, (who) gifts support.' Gathas, Y51:20; my translation (detailed and discussed
in *Part Six: Yasna 51:20*, with other translations given for comparative purposes).
So here, 'salvation' consists of truth, its comprehension good thinking, its embodiment (*aramaiti⁓*), and worship ⁓
which in the Gathas, is worshipping the Divine with Its own qualities (which are also the reward for so worshipping).

[21] Insler's translation has "those men...", the word men is not in the Avestan text of this verse.

[22] In law, we have the concepts of *malum in se* ⁓ what is intrinsically wrong; and *malum prohibitum* ⁓ what is wrong
because it is prohibited (even though it may not be intrinsically wrong).   The only 'wrongs' in the Gathas, are those
that are intrinsically wrong (*malum in se*).   By contrast, the later texts are full of 'wrongs' that are prohibited, although
not intrinsically wrong (*malum prohibitum*).   The latter soon become obsolete, as cultures and environments change.
That is why the Gathas are perennially relevant, whereas a lot of stuff in the later texts has become obsolete ⁓ irrelevant
in light of increased knowledge and cultural changes.

[23] First, a word of explanation.
In Pahlavi, 'Ahriman' is the name of the Chief Devil. It means the same as Avestan *angra⁓ mainyu⁓* ⁓ 'a hate⁓filled,
harmful, pain⁓causing, hurtful, inimical way of being'. And the Chief Devil generates all the evil in the world
(including subordinate demons ⁓ all of which have the names of human vices). The following quotation from this
Pahlavi text (said to be a collection of the words of ancient Zoroastrian sages) shows that this Chief Devil ('Ahriman')
is within us, and that it can be annihilated when we remove it from our beings.

> "It is possible to put Ahreman out of the world in this manner, namely, every person, for his own part, chases
> him out of his body, for the dwelling of Ahreman in the world is in the body of men. When he will have no
> dwelling in the bodies of men, he will be annihilated from the whole world; for as long as there is in this world
> dwelling, even in a single person, ... a small demon, Ahreman is in the world." *Dinkard 6*, § 264, Shaul Shaked
> translation 1979, *Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, p. 103.

[24] Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta.*

[25] Detailed in *Part Six: Yasna Haptangaiti 35: 2 ⁓ 3.*

[26] In the *Jasame Avanghe Mazda* prayer, we declare our commitment to choosing good thoughts, good words, and good
actions ⁓ as a way of living, as an affirmation of belief, and as allying oneself with the Divine, and worshipping with
such thoughts, words and actions ⁓ which indeed reflects Zarathushtra's ideas in the Gathas.

[27] SBE Vol. 23, p. 317.

[28] For example,

> " The endless lights, self-made, we celebrate [*anaγra raocå xᵛaδātå̊ yazamaide*] ...' *Sirozah 2:30* my translation,
> Av. words from Geldner, 2P p. 267.

> 'Whenever, O truth⁓possessing Right Judgment [*raš̌nvō aṣ̌āum*], you are in the self-made [*xᵛaδāta*] endless lights
> [*anaγra raocå*].   ...' *Rashn Yasht*, Yt. 12.35, my translation, Av. words from Geldner, Part 2, p. 167.

Skjaervo 2003 seems unsure of the meaning of *xᵛaδāta⁓* ⁓ placing a question mark after his definition "set in place by
oneself (itself, themselves)?" I think *xᵛaδāta⁓* derives from,

> *xᵛa⁓* 'own' (Skjaervo 2006). In Younger Avestan *xᵛa⁓* is a reflexive pronoun as in 'one's own self'; and
> *δāta⁓* derives from *dā⁓* the meanings of which include 'to make, to produce'.

I therefore take *xᵛaδāta-* to mean 'self made', 'self produced', 'self established'.

So we see that we make, produce, establish, the enlightened state of being (Endless Light) for existence as a whole (of which we are a fragment) ~ taking care to not infringe anyone's freedom to choose.

[29] *Bundahishn* Ch. 1, **§** 5; SBE Vol. 5, p. 4, E. W. West translation.

[30] The Pazand (Middle Persian) *vahesht,* is Avestan *vahishta-*; both terms are a short hand way of saying *ahu- vahishta-* 'the most~good existence' (one of Zarathushtra's terms for what we call 'heaven').   Pazand *vahesht* became the later Persian *behesht* 'heaven', but by then, 'heaven' had become a place ~ it was no longer remembered as a state of being (detailed in *Part Three: Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*).

[31] Zarathushtra describes his teachings ~ the path of truth ~ as joyful. For example, he says, "... I shall speak of those things which are to be borne in mind ... which things are to be looked upon in joy throughout your days." Gathas, Y30:1, Insler 1975.

[32] SBE Vol. 31, p. 196.

[33] Detailed in *Part One: A Friendly Universe*;   and in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution.*