

## A Question Of Power.

I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to a friend, a Zoroastrian from South Korea, whose questions motivated me to think about whether or not the Divine, in Zarathushtra's thought, is all powerful, omnipotent, and whether it matters.

Centuries after Zarathushtra, during later Avestan, and also Sasanian times, Zoroastrians did indeed believe in the omnipotence of the Divine.<sup>1</sup>

Today, opinions differ.

This is something to celebrate! ~ that both priests and lay Zoroastrians have the *courage* to question whether the Divine is all powerful. To think, to question, is essential to the search for truth. And the search for truth is a core teaching of Zarathushtra.<sup>2</sup>

Now it may surprise you, but this question ~ whether or not the Divine is all powerful ~ has practical value. Every aspect of Zarathushtra's teachings ~ especially his perception of the Divine ~ is part of a framework for viewing existence, which affects how we think, speak, act, which in turn affects the kind of world we create.

So what's the answer? Is the idea of an all powerful, omnipotent Divine just a security blanket? Is Divine omnipotence supported by reason? Is it a part of Zarathushtra's framework for viewing existence? Well, part of the problem is that such words as "all powerful" and "omnipotent" mean different things to different people. Zarathushtra has some unusual ideas about 'power', 'strength', 'might'. So I will lay the evidence of his words, his teachings, before you, and you can decide for yourself, whether in his thought, the Divine is "all powerful", "omnipotent", and whether it matters.

Let's start by seeing how Zarathushtra describes the Divine in this respect. You need to be aware that in Avestan the superlative degree ~ such as '**most mighty**' and '**mightiest**' ~ is not used in a competitive sense. The superlative is used, sometimes as a crescendo of expression,<sup>3</sup> and sometimes as the highest degree of a given quality.<sup>4</sup> Zarathushtra speaks of,

"... the straight paths of the **Mighty One**..." Y43:3, Insler 1975,

"... the glory of the **Mighty One**." Y51:2, Insler 1975,

"... the **Most Mighty One**, the truthful Lord, [*spənta*- 'beneficial'] in His action..." Y46:9, Insler 1975,

"The **Wise One** [*mazdā*- 'Wisdom'] ... is the **Mightiest Lord**, ..." Y33:11, Insler 1975,

"... the **most powerful Lord** ..." Y28:5, Insler 1975,

"... [*mazdā*- ... *ahura*- 'the Lord Wisdom'], **who rules at will** ..." Y43:1, Insler 1975.

Now if the Divine "**rules at will**", wouldn't that mean It can do anything It wants to do, without any limits?

And would the absence of limits, by definition, include the ability to be good, as well as false, evil, wrong, controlling, coercive? In fact, that was exactly what the deities of Zarathushtra's culture were believed to be ~ deities who were portrayed as being a mix of both good and very evil qualities,<sup>5</sup> and whose belief systems controlled their worshippers through fear of horrible punishments for disobedience ~ in this life, not in an afterlife.

But Zarathushtra rejected this idea of godhood. In his view, to be worthy of worship, a being has to be wholly good, with no taint of evil in It.<sup>6</sup> So is Zarathushtra being inconsistent here? If the Divine has no taint of evil in It, would that mean the Divine is limited in what It can do? which by definition would mean It is not all powerful?

Well, as my friend from South Korea wisely pointed out, perhaps the answer is that the Divine does not choose to be evil. Just as the Divine chooses to not interfere with our freedom to choose.<sup>7</sup> For example, in the Gathas, Zarathushtra says,

"...Him who left to our will (to choose between) the [*spāncā* 'beneficial'] and the [*aspāncā* 'non-beneficial'] ..." Y45:9, Insler 1975.<sup>8</sup>

~ indicating that the Divine chooses to be tolerant ~ an idea that is confirmed in an ancient prayer which in fact, calls Wisdom (*mazdā-*) the **all knowing tolerator** [or **Tolerant One**]. It says:

"Homage to the **all knowing tolerator** [**Tolerant One**], who sent through Zarathushtra ... teachings of religion for the people of the world so that they may have friendship, inculcate ... inner wisdom and knowledge gained from hearing. **For the information and guidance** of all men who are, who were, and who will be hereafter ..." *Doa Nam Setayeshne* prayer T. R. Sethna translation.<sup>9</sup>

Notice, this prayer says that the teachings of religion are **for information and guidance** ~ it does not mention **obedience**. In Zarathushtra's thought, the freedom to choose, is essential to spiritual growth.

So I take it that in his view, the "**Mightiest Lord**" (Y33:11), the "**most powerful Lord**" (Y28:5), who "**... rules at will ...**" (Y43:1), is a Lord who chooses to have no taint of evil in Its own thoughts, words, actions, and who chooses to be tolerant.

In fact, Zarathushtra's idea of *ahura-* 'Lord' is one who has lordship over, who possesses completely, the qualities that make a being Divine. He speaks of,

"... the very **Wise Master** [*ahura-* 'lord'] of good thinking ..." Y30:1, Insler 1975. The Avestan word that Insler translates as **Master**, is *ahura-*.

"... Lord [*ahura-*] of the word and deed stemming from [*vohu- mainyu-* '(a) good way of being'] ..." Y45:8, Insler 1975.

"... Thou art the Lord [*ahura-*] by reason of Thy tongue (which is) in harmony with truth, and by reason of Thy words stemming from good thinking ..." Y51:3; Insler 1975.

"... [*mazdā-* 'Wisdom'] in rule [*x šaθra-*] is Lord [*ahura-*] through [*ārmaiti-* 'embodied truth']." Yasna 47:1, Insler 1975.

The meaning of *ārmaiti-* has not yet been decoded, and translations differ widely. The only definition of *ārmaiti-* which fits all the ways in which Zarathushtra uses that word, is '**thoughts, words and actions that embody (or personify) the true, wholly good, order of existence**' ('embodied truth' for short) ~ all of which has been detailed in another chapter.<sup>10</sup> To give just one example (there are many more), he says,

"... Through its actions, [*ārmaiti-*] gives substance to the truth ..." Y44:6, Insler 1975.

And Zarathushtra thinks that the source of power, might, strength ~ in the Divine and in mortals ~ is the 7 qualities that make a being divine. Here are a few examples (there are many more). He says,

[addressing Wisdom] " ... Thee and the truth [*aša-*] and that thinking [*manah-*] which is [*vahišta-* 'most good'] ... ye are the **strongest**, (and) to **mighty** ones (like you) belong the **powers** and the mastery [*x šaθra-* 'rule']." Y28:9, Insler 1975.

He speaks of "**... powerful might through truth...**" Y33:12, Insler 1975.

" ... **strong** with both truth and good thinking, ..." Y50:7, Insler 1975.

"... the wondrous **powers** of good thinking allied with truth." Y43:2, Insler 1975.

"... the enduring and esteemed strength of good thinking ..." Y48:6, Insler 1975.

So we see that he equates power, might, strength, with an enlightened existence ~ truth and its comprehension, good thinking.

And he describes another quality of the Divine ~ *ārmaiti*- ~ 'truth embodied in thought, word and action' ~ as giving power, and as being a force. This is not a coercive force.

Force is used here, as in Star Wars' *May the force be with you.* A force that is strong enough to bring about what is true, good, right. He says,

"... receive force through ... [*ārmaiti*- 'embodied truth'], ..." Y33:12, Insler 1975

"... Give thou, o [*ārmaiti*- 'embodied truth'] power to Vishtaspa and to me. ..." Y28:7, Insler 1975.

And in a rather lovely paradox, Zarathushtra throws light on Wisdom's power, His rule. He says,

"Glorious Jamaspa Haugva,<sup>11</sup> (has displayed) this understanding of His power:

One chooses that rule [*x ʒaθra*-] of good thinking [*vohu- manah*-] allied with truth [*aṣa*-] in order to serve ..." Y51:18, Insler 1975.

I really like that. We see this same idea of a rule that serves, in the story of the legendary Yima (Jamsheed),<sup>12</sup> in which Zarathushtra is purportedly told by the Divine (in a story telling way) about the Divine's instruction to Yima (Jamsheed) on how he should rule.

"... undertake thou to nourish, to rule, ... to watch over my world." Darmesteter translation, *Vendidad*, Ch. 2, § 4.<sup>13</sup>

A rule that serves.

Finally, Zarathushtra describes the 6th and 7th qualities of the Divine ~ completeness (*haurvatāt*-) and non-deathness (*amərətāt*-) as powers. He speaks of,

"...completeness [*haurvatāt*-] and [*amərətāt*- 'non-deathness'] ... these two enduring powers ..." Y45:10, Insler 1975.

So we have to ask ourselves: Are these opinions of Zarathushtra based on reason? Do they accord with the realities of our existence?

Well, we are so used to thinking of power, might, strength, as being physical forces which dominate, control, coerce, that we may feel a bit skeptical about whether divine qualities ~ truth (*aṣa- vahišta*-), its good comprehension (*vohu- manah*-), its beneficial embodiment (*spənta- ārmaiti*-), its good rule (*vohu- x ʒaθra*-), a beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu*-), could be the source of real might, real power, real strength, in our material world.

Well, there are two aspects of Zarathushtra's teachings that may change your mind.

*The first aspect* is that we reap what we sow. Existence has been ordered in such a way that what we do ~ the good we do, and the bad we do ~ comes back to us. So those who harm, control, coerce, etc., will in turn experience what it is like to be harmed, controlled, coerced. Not as punishment. The purpose of the law of consequences is not to punish. Its purpose is to incrementally increase understanding, (to incrementally enlighten), as part of a process of spiritual growth.<sup>14</sup>

Now, you might question: How do we know that the law of consequences is not administered by an angry God, for punishment, for vengeance, to put the fear of 'God' into us?

Because Zarathushtra specifically says, that the law of consequences is administered by Wisdom, through good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), and through a beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*), to (ultimately) bring about a good end, and satisfaction for everyone. He says,

"...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohu- manah-*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Y43:16, Insler 1975.<sup>15</sup>

"[*mazdā- ahura-* 'Lord Wisdom'], ... with this [*spənta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'], Thou shalt give the distribution in the good to both factions [*rānōibyā* 'for both types (of conduct)],<sup>16</sup> through Thy fire, ..." Y47:6, Insler 1975.

"...when the distribution in the good shall occur to both factions [*rəṇayā* 'for both types (of conduct)], through Thy bright fire, [*mazdā-* 'Wisdom']." Y31:19, Insler 1975.

It is important to be aware that fire in the Gathas, is never used as an instrument of torture ~ like burning people in hell. There is no hell in an afterlife ~ fiery or otherwise ~ in the Gathas or in any Avestan texts.<sup>17</sup> Zarathushtra and later Avestan texts consistently uses fire as a metaphor for, and symbol of, truth (*aša-*) and its comprehension good thinking (*vohu- manah-*). He describes fire more than once as bright ~ a fire that gives light, (enlightens).

And notice, the words "through Thy fire," and "through Thy bright fire," apply "... [*rānōibyā* 'for both types (of conduct)] ..." ~ for both good conduct and bad conduct. So if the Divine gives the "... distribution in the good [*vanhāu*] ..." through Its bright fire ~ to those who act in a good way, then fire obviously cannot be for punishment.

Zarathushtra also describes the law of consequences as (eventually) delivering 'satisfaction' to everyone ~ for both types of conduct ~ for good choices and bad ones.

'The satisfaction [*x šnūtəm* sg.] which you, Wisdom, give for both types (of conduct) [*rānōibyā*], through your bright fire, through molten metal, (is) to be given for clarification among living beings, (is) to be given for) untruthfulness [*drəgvantəm*] to be destroyed'. (In this way) You save truthfulness [*ašavanəm*].' Y51:9, my translation. (Insler's translation is footnoted).<sup>18</sup> In the Gathas, molten metal, is used as a metaphor for the soul refining process, during which there will always be mutual loving help, to see us through the difficulties of the refiner's fire.<sup>19</sup>

He also says, "That satisfaction [*x šnūtəm* sg.] which Thou hast created for both factions [*rānōibyā* 'for both types (of conduct)] ... and hast promised through fire and truth [*aša-*] ..." Y31:3, Insler 1975.

One "satisfaction [sg.]" for both types of conduct.

In this last quotation, you may question: If fire is the material metaphor for truth, why does Zarathushtra use both fire and truth. I think he does so because fire, as a material metaphor, represents the soul refining process in material existence, and truth is the resulting (incremental) enlightenment.

So in Zarathushtra's thought, the law of consequences makes it certain that when we harm, control, coerce, any part of existence, we are simply setting ourselves up for future grief, as part of the soul refining process. Therefore harming, controlling, coercing, is not being powerful. It is being foolish, self-defeating.

But it's not just the law of consequences that causes us to suffer adversities. In the Gathas, the process of attaining wisdom is experience based, so it stands to reason that we would have to experience a huge variety of experiences ~ both earned and unearned, good experiences, and adverse ones ~ to enable an incremental enlightenment to wisdom.

Now you might object: Why is it wrong for us mortals to inflict pain and suffering on others, but O.K. for the Divine to do so? Do we have a double standard here?

Well, a knife in the hands of a murderer, kills. A knife in the hands of a surgeon, heals. No matter how painful a surgical procedure might be, its purpose is beneficial ~ to heal some part of our material shells. In the same way, the adversities we experience ~ earned and unearned, however painful they may be ~ are beneficial. They enable us, freely from within ~ to heal our souls by getting rid of our false, evil preferences, because when we are on the receiving end of the suffering caused by falsehood, cruelty, injustice, prejudice, and all the other evils that afflict us ~ whether earned or unearned ~ we realize that is not the way things should be. That is not the way we want things to be. This new understanding, acquired incrementally over many experiences, eventually eliminates our wrongful preferences, so that eventually we evolve to a state of being that is wholly beneficial, that personifies the qualities of the Divine completely, with no evil preferences remaining.<sup>20</sup> We no longer want to be evil, we no longer choose to be evil, we no longer are a mix of preferences that are good and evil, harmful and beneficial.

Zarathushtra's solution to the problem of evil is not punishment. It is changing minds, changing preferences, freely from within.

*To summarize this first aspect of his teachings:*

The Divine, who "rules at will" is powerful enough to bring about the defeat of evil ~ throughout existence, so no one is left behind. Everyone eventually makes it to complete goodness, which gives satisfaction to the whole of existence. And the Divine is powerful enough to do so in a way that allows each of us ~ each fragment of existence ~ to be part of the solution, so that our evil preferences are defeated freely from within, with only our good preferences remaining.<sup>21</sup>

*There is a second aspect of Zarathushtra's teachings that you may wish to consider, before deciding whether he is correct in thinking that the qualities of the Divine are strong, powerful forces that make Wisdom, the "Mightiest Lord" (Y33:11), the "most powerful Lord" (Y28:5), One "...who rules at will ...".*

One of his paradoxes, is that our spiritual evolution to wisdom, occurs in the arena of the material world ~ through material experiences. But it is readily apparent that in our reality, on this planet, all mortals are imperfect. No being who is mortal has eliminated all its wrongful preferences by the time it dies ~ in one lifetime.

So if Zarathushtra's teaching is true, that the material existence is the arena for perfecting the spirit, it follows (as the day the night) that each of us ~ each unperfected fragment of existence ~ is bound by mortality. We will continue to die, until the perfecting process is complete.

Now, think of the most famous tyrants in history ~ Atilla the Hun, Genghis Khan, Stalin, Hitler, to name a few ~ these men exercised overwhelming physical power ~ cruel, coercive power ~ for a brief period of time and then died. Not one of them was powerful enough to defeat death. They all were bound by mortality.

Zarathushtra's conception of the Divine is a being who is not bound by mortality. The 7th quality of the Divine is non-deathness (*aməratāt-*). But he goes a step further. He tells us that all mortals presently have qualities of the Divine within us, incompletely, and that when we attain these divine qualities completely, it will free us from the bondage of death, we will make the transition ('cross the bridge'),<sup>22</sup> from mortality to non-deathness, because the perfecting process will then be complete, and material, mortal existence will no longer be necessary.

As Zarathushtra says, "...That the soul of a truthful person [*ašavan-* 'a truth-possessing (one)'] be powerful in [*aməratāt-* 'non-deathness']..." Y45:7, Insler 1975.

In short, defeating death is something that all the most powerful tyrants, in the entire history of our planet, have been unable to do. Yet, according to Zarathushtra, the Divine is not bound by mortality, and each fragment of existence will also defeat death, when it attains the 7 qualities that make a being Divine,

1. The beneficial way of being (*spānta- mainyu-*), which is
2. the true, wholly good order of existence (*aša- vahišta-*),
3. Its good comprehension (*voḥu- manah-*),
4. Its beneficial embodiment in thought, word, and action (*spānta- ārmaiti-*),
5. Its good rule (*voḥu- xšaθra-*),
6. Its complete attainment (*haurvatāt-*), resulting in
7. Non-deathness (*amərətāt-*)

An enlightened state of being ~ which is Wisdom personified. In a Pahlavi text, a name of the Divine is 'Endless Light'.<sup>23</sup>

But let us not forget: Zarathushtra tells us to follow the path of truth, for truth's own sake ~ not to be powerful, not to defeat death, but truth for truth's own sake.<sup>24</sup>

Which brings us back to the questions with which we started: Is the Divine, who is powerful enough to defeat evil, who is powerful enough to defeat death, and who is powerful enough to enable every fragment of existence to defeat both evil and death also, freely from within, leaving no one behind ~ is such a Being all powerful, omnipotent? More to the point, does that kind of omnipotence matter? Is it worthwhile?

I leave it to you to decide.

In closing, I would like to leave you with some questions. Put them on the back burner of your mind and let your mind play over them. (I like to tease you a little, but I have footnoted where you can find answers in the Gathas).<sup>25</sup> Here are the questions:

If, as Zarathushtra tells us, mortals have, incompletely, five of the qualities that make a being Divine, and if mortals can attain all these qualities completely,<sup>26</sup> through a spiritual evolution to wisdom, was the being we now call Wisdom ~ the Divine ~ also a part of this perfecting process? Did the Divine have to earn the joy, the enlightenment, the state of being that is Zarathushtra's paradise? In the Gathas, one of the names for paradise is the House of Song ~ a state of being that houses what later Avestan texts call *uštāt-* ~ a state of joyful enlightenment.<sup>27</sup> Here is a luminous Gatha verse ~ one of many. See what you make of it.

"What prize Zarathushtra previously promised to his adherents ~ into that House of Song did the [*ahura-mazdā-* 'Lord Wisdom'] come as the first one.<sup>28</sup> This prize has been promised to you during the times of salvation by reason of your good thinking and truth." Y51:15, Insler 1975.

Other Gatha verses tell us, that we complete the Divine, and the Divine completes us.<sup>29</sup>

So, did what is now the Divine have to go through the perfecting process? Is the Divine a union of the perfected fragments of existence?

If that shocks you (as it certainly shocked me!), consider this:

Is there any merit to being perfect if One could never be anything else? Is an unearned perfection superior to one that is earned? Can we appreciate how amazing is this envisionment of the Divine: as One who does not ask us to do anything, suffer anything, that It has not already done, suffered and experienced Itself? A conception of the Divine that does not just sit in the splendid isolation of perfection, but enables all of

us to evolve to wisdom through a process that requires us watch out for each other, help each other make it through the refiner's fire, so that no one is left behind.

By the way, in Zarathushtra's thought, 'salvation' is being saved from untruth ~ from all that is false, ignorant, wrong.<sup>30</sup> Salvation is a state of being that houses the joy of enlightenment ~ which some later texts call Endless Light(s).<sup>31</sup>

"... that salvation of yours, let (it) be given to us ~ the true order of existence through good thinking, words through which embodied truth (exists), the worship of Wisdom, with reverence, (who) gifts support (to us).' Y51:20, my translation.<sup>32</sup>

Notice, the support of Wisdom is a gift. It does not have to be deserved.

And notice: "the worship of Wisdom" is a part of salvation. And how do we worship Wisdom? According to Zarathushtra, with Wisdom's own divine qualities, in thought, word and action, in the temple of life.<sup>33</sup>

I shall always worship ... you [mazdā- ahura- 'Lord Wisdom'], with truth [aša-] and the very best thinking [mazdā- ahura-] and with their rule [xšaθra-]..." Y50:4, Insler 1975.

"I shall try to glorify Him ... [yasnāiš ārmatōiš]<sup>34</sup> 'with (the) worship of embodied truth', ..." Gathas, Y45:10.

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<sup>1</sup> In the *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*, a Younger Avestan text, the author of the Yasht has the Divine (purportedly) enumerating Its names, (as a way of describing the nature of the Divine). And one of these names is as follows:

"... My name is the King who rules at his will; ..." Yt. 1:13, Darmesteter translation, SBE Vol. 23, p. 27.

And in the "101 Names" prayer, composed during Sasanian times, a name of the Divine is "Omnipotent" [*harvesp tavan*].

<sup>2</sup> The search for truth is a fundament of Zarathushtra's thought (detailed in *Part One: The Search For Truth*). In fact, one of my favorite names for the Divine in the Younger Avestan *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*, is:

"... My name is One of whom questions are asked ..." Yt. 1:7, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 24.

How can we search for truth, unless we can question anything and everything? But unfortunately, as the centuries passed, during YAv. times the worship of pre-Zarathushtrian deities (whom Zarathushtra rejected), became syncretized with Zarathushtra's spiritual envisionment, and as the religious establishment became more powerful, its doctrines in some YAv. texts became cruel control mechanisms. And to give such controlling doctrines authority, they were cloaked in questions (purportedly) asked by Zarathushtra, with Ahura Mazda (purportedly) giving answers that expressed the doctrines of the religious establishment. We see this in many YAv. texts, but they reached the height of monstrosity in the *Vendidad (Videvdat)*, a text written in Younger Avestan, but long after Avestan times, because its grammar is so faulty that its authors could not have been fluent in Avestan. Referenced and detailed in the footnotes of *Part Three: The Absence Of Damnation & Hell In Other Avestan Texts*; and in *Part Five: The Vendidad, An Overview*.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of how in Avestan, the superlative is used as a crescendo of expression, are given in *Part Three: The Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), An Analysis*, including one of its footnotes.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of how in Avestan, the superlative is used as the highest degree of a given quality, are found in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of The Most Good, Vahishta*; *vahišta-* is the superlative degree of *vohu-* 'good'.

<sup>5</sup> Detailed in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*.

<sup>6</sup> Detailed in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*.

<sup>7</sup> The freedom to choose is a foundational teaching of Zarathushtra's (see *Part One: The Freedom To Choose*); essential to spiritual evolution (detailed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*).

<sup>8</sup> The meanings of *spāncā* and *aspāncā* are discussed in *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*.

<sup>9</sup> T. R. Sethna, *Khordeh Avesta*, p. 63 (1980 reprint).

<sup>10</sup> The Avestan word *ārmaiti-* has not yet been decoded, and linguists are in wide disagreement about its meaning. It has been translated as right-mindedness; divine wisdom; piety or respect; faith and devotion; satisfying intention; fittingness, submission and humility; and serenity, stability and tranquility. But many of these definitions are irrelevant to the Divine, and none of them fits all the evidence of how Zarathushtra actually uses *ārmaiti-* in the Gathas, detailed in *Part One: Embodied Truth, Aramaiti*.

<sup>11</sup> Jamaspa Haugva was the prime minister of King Vishtaspa who befriended Zarathushtra. In the tradition, it is said that Jamaspa married Zarathushtra's youngest daughter, Pouruchista. And the last Gatha, Yasna 53, is believed to have been composed by Zarathushtra for his youngest daughter's wedding which, in those ancient times, included the marriage of many brides and grooms on one occasion.

<sup>12</sup> The legendary Avestan Yima is called Jamsheed in the Shahnameh. Yima was an Indo-Iranian legendary figure (Vedic Yama) that originated when the Indic and Iranian peoples were still one tribe (what linguists call the Indo-Iranians). We know that Yima predated Zarathushtra because he is mentioned in the Gathas. The fact that the story of Yima in Younger Avestan texts mentions "Ahura Mazda", has caused some people to argue that Ahura Mazda, as a deity, pre-dated Zarathushtra. But actually, in Vedic texts, there is no mention of Yama worshipping Ahura Mazda. In fact, as the late Professor Thieme (Insler's teacher) has pointed out, there is no mention in any Vedic text of any deity called 'Wisdom' (Av. *mazdā-*, Ved. *medhās*), detailed (with references) in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*. So it would be reasonable to conclude that the story of Yima in YAv. texts was Zoroastrianized, to teach Zoroastrian values and precepts (such as 'good rule' *vohu- xšaθra-*). In such ancient times, when most people could not read or write, stories, songs and poetry were effective teaching devices (while entertaining).

<sup>13</sup> SBE 4, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>15</sup> "...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohū ... manajhā*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Y43:16, Insler 1975. The words *vohū ... manajhā* are instr. sg. ('with/through/by \_\_\_') of the stems *vohu-* and *manah-*.

<sup>16</sup> The dative dual word *rānōibyā* has not yet been decoded. I think the stem word, *rāna-* means 'type'. Insler 1975 thinks the stem means 'faction', and he translates the dat. dual *rānōibyā* as "to both factions". Two factions are two types of people. But Zarathushtra does not classify people into 2 factions ~ the good and the bad. Everyone (in our present, material, existence) is a mix of qualities and preferences that are 'bad' and 'more good' (Y30:3), 'harmful' and 'more beneficial' (Y45:2). I translate *rānōibyā* as 'for both types (of conduct)', which parallels the idea expressed in "...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohū ... manajhā*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Y43:16, Insler 1975. It is types of *conduct* that generate consequences.

A detailed look at *rāna-* words and all the ways (and verses) in which they are used in the Gathas, is discussed in *Part Six: Yasna 43:12*.

<sup>17</sup> Even in the Pahlavi text *Arda Viraf Namah* which specializes in the torments of a punitive hell, fire is not mentioned as an instrument of torture, see *Part Three: Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion of the meaning and linguistics of this verse, as well as other translations by eminent linguists for comparative purposes, see *Part Six: Yasna 51:9*; and *Part Two: Molten, Glowing Metal*.

The Insler 1975 translation is, "The satisfaction [*x šnūtəm*] which Thou shalt give to both factions [*rānōibyā*] through Thy pure fire and the molten iron, Wise One, is to be given as a sign among living beings, in order to destroy the deceitful [*drəgvantəm* sg.] and to save the truthful [*ašavanəm* sg.]." Y51:9.

As you can see, Insler has translated *drəgvantəm* as 'the deceitful' and *ašavanəm* as 'the truthful' ~ each such translation is pl. meaning people. But these two Avestan words are sg. See *Part Three: Ashavan & Dregvant* for a discussion of this verse, and why (in my view) these adjectives cannot be used as nouns that mean people, but only as



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nouns that mean qualities, if the translation is to be grammatically accurate and also consistent with Zarathushtra's thought.

<sup>19</sup> Detailed in *Part Two*:

*Molten, Glowing Metal*; and  
*Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>20</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>21</sup> Later Avestan texts speak of *frašō.kərāiti-* ~ which means forwarding (existence) to truth (*frašō*), and making it happen (*kərāiti-*); Insler's insightful (and in my view, accurate) ideas regarding the meaning of *frašō.kərāiti-* and its origins in the Gathas, are discussed in *Part Three: Heaven in Other Avestan Texts*.

<sup>22</sup> See *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge Of Discerning*.

<sup>23</sup> Referenced in the chapter *Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds*, on the *Home Page* of my website.

<sup>24</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: A Question of Reward & The Path*. See also *Part One: The Manthra Of Truth, Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu)*, a manthra which I (and some, but not all, scholars) believe to have been composed by Zarathushtra himself, but not as a part of the Gathas.

<sup>25</sup> Discussed with evidence, in the following chapters:

In *Part One: The Identity Of The Divine*.

In *Part Two*:

*The Puzzle of Creation*,

*The Puzzle Of The Singular & The Plural*;

*A Question Of Immanence*,

*Did Wisdom Choose Too?* and

In *Part Six: Yasna 51:22*.

<sup>26</sup> Detailed in *Part One: Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*.

<sup>27</sup> Detailed in *Part Six: Y43:1*; and in *Part Three: The Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), An Analysis*.

<sup>28</sup> The Avestan word *paourvya-* means 'first'. In Avestan (as in English!) 'first' is used with many flavors of meaning ~ first in time (a chronological 'first'), first as in fundamental, first as in the highest quality (*a diamond of the first water*), etc. This Gatha verse says "... into that House of Song did [*ahura- mazdā-* '(the) Lord Wisdom'] come as the first one ..." Y51:15, Insler 1975. But Avestan has no articles 'a' or 'the'; we need to add such articles to make an English translation fluid. So the foregoing quotation could with equal accuracy be translated as "... into that House of Song did (the) Lord Wisdom come as (a) first one ..." Y51:15. And here, I don't think 'first' is used chronologically, I think it is used for the highest quality of being because in the Gathas, the state of being that is Zarathushtra's paradise is a perfected state of being ~ the highest quality of being ~ and as I understand the evidence ~ taken collectively ~ the Divine is a union of each perfected fragment of existence. Detailed in:

In *Part One*:

*The Identity Of The Divine*;

*Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*;

*The Fire In All Things*;

And in *Part Two*:

*The Puzzle Of Creation*;

*A Question Of Immanence*;

*Did Wisdom Choose Too*, and in the other chapters and texts referenced in these chapters.

<sup>29</sup> See *Part One: Completeness & Non-Deathness*, in which I quote Gatha verses in which Zarathushtra says that we complete the Divine, and the Divine completes us.

<sup>30</sup> Detailed in *Part One: A Question Of Salvation*.

<sup>31</sup> References are provided in *Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds*, on the *Home Page*.

<sup>32</sup> Detailed with other translations for comparative purposes in *Part Six: Yasna 51:20*.

<sup>33</sup> Detailed in *Part One: Worship & Prayer* (basic); and in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of Worship* (more in-depth).

<sup>34</sup> *yasnāiš* [instr. pl.] 'with the worships' [the plural thoughts, words and actions that embody truth, and comprise Zarathushtra's idea of worship]  
*āmatōiš* [gen. sg.] 'of embodied truth'.