

In a Nutshell, & Some FAQs.

His name in his own language is Zarathushtra.¹ The ancient Greeks, who probably couldn't pronounce the name, called him Zoroastres, which became the Latin Zoroaster, which was adopted as his name by later European scholars, and generated the word Zoroastrianism for the religion he founded.

But the most ancient practitioners of the religion called it *mazdayasna* which literally means 'wisdom-worship/celebration' ~ including perhaps with double entendre the worship /celebration of both the concept (wisdom) and the Divine who personifies it, Wisdom (*mazda*).² Several centuries later, its practitioners called the religion *din-i-behi* 'the religion of goodness' because of the central role that 'goodness' plays in its tenets.³

The religion originated in prehistoric Iran. Today, Zoroastrians live all over the world. The largest group (roughly 60,000 or less) lives in India. Next in numbers are those who still survive in Iran. Some fairly large groups live in the USA, Canada, Britain, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. And smaller groups live in other countries around the world. There are no separate religious denominations in Zoroastrianism, as there are in larger religions. However, Zoroastrians sometimes have differing views on various issues. There is no Pope or other religious authority who has the right to mandate religious beliefs. But priests and lay teachers offer knowledge and guidance.

In this chapter, for ease of reading, I have not transliterated Avestan words. References and more detailed information are contained in other chapters (identified here in footnotes).

Do we have Zarathushtra's teachings in his own words?

Zarathushtra composed 17 poems that are called the Gathas (which means 'songs'), which contain his teachings. In his day, most people were not literate, and knowledge was transmitted orally through poems, songs, and stories. The Gathas were passed down from generation to generation and later were written down. We no longer know the music to which the Gathas were sung. Their words are all that have survived of Zarathushtra's own words. All quotations from the Gathas in this chapter are from the Insler 1975 translation.

When and where did Zarathushtra live?

No one knows for certain when Zarathushtra lived. Opinions range from roughly 6,000 BCE to 590 BCE, but archeological and linguistic evidence suggests that he may have lived no earlier than 2000 BCE, and more probably around 1700 BCE, although not everyone agrees. For example, in the Gathas he uses chariot racing (as a metaphor), so we know that he must have lived after horses were domesticated, and the wheel was invented and had evolved sufficiently (in speed and balance) to be used for racing vehicles.⁴

No one knows for certain exactly where Zarathushtra lived. However, his language (Avestan) is the most ancient (known) form of all Iranian languages, with closer linguistic ties to eastern Iranian languages. Knowledge of Avestan had died out some time before 200 CE, but the process of decoding it began in the late 18th century (CE), when linguists became aware of its similarity to Vedic Sanskrit. Today, roughly 80% of the language has been decoded, enabling us to understand Zarathushtra's own words.

The Gathas also give us glimpses of his life and times.

They show that Zarathushtra lived in a time period that was beset by widespread misery and suffering; that corruption, cruelty, tyranny, greed, bondage, predatory violence, were rife; and that priests and princes

combined to control people through fear and lies. He says "...the rich Karpan [a type of priest] chose the rule of tyrants and deceit rather than truth [*asha*]." Y32.12.⁵ In one Gatha, an allegorical lament is made to the Divine by all that is good in mortal existence,⁶ about "... the cruelty of fury and violence, of bondage and might, ..." Y29.1.

Zarathushtra was deeply troubled by this state of affairs. He opposed and spoke out against such practices, and as a result was persecuted, slandered, and exiled from his community. "To what land to flee? Where shall I go to flee? They exclude (me) from my family and from my clan..." Y46.1.

"...throughout my lifetime, I have been condemned as the greatest defiler, I who try to satisfy the poorly protected (creatures) with truth [*asha*], Wise One ... come to me, and give support to me. Through good thinking, find a means of destruction of this." Y49.1.

He used his good thinking to search for solutions to the problems that were causing so much suffering, and arrived at a new understanding of the Divine, and how to bring about change through living our lives in ways that bring both spiritual joy as well as material happiness and well-being.⁷ He travelled from place to place, enduring hardships, teaching this new envisionment, without success. He tells of an occasion when he sought shelter and was turned away although his "two draft animals were trembling from wandering and from cold." Y51.12.

Eventually a king and queen (of an unspecified region) chose to follow Zarathushtra's teachings, which then became better known and increased in popularity. In the centuries that followed, it spread all over the ancient world, and over time influenced many religions that are dominant today. But devastating wars ~ first when Alexander destroyed the Achaemenian empire (around 331 BCE), and the final one when Arabs invaded Iran (around 647 ~ 650 CE) ~ resulted in texts being burned and the learned killed, so much knowledge was lost, and after 650 CE Zoroastrians became a persecuted minority in their own land, from which some of them later fled to India to survive, around the 900s CE.

Why does fire play a central role in Zoroastrianism?⁸

In the Gathas, and all other ancient texts, fire (a form of light) is used as a metaphor and symbol for Truth. Zarathushtra speaks of "...Thy truth-strong fire..." Y43.4. A physical fire cannot be made strong with Truth. But a physical fire gives light. And Truth enables enlightenment. So we see that he was using fire as a metaphor for the light of Truth. A later Avestan text says "Give me, O Fire, ... an expanded mind, ... and understanding, even an understanding continually growing in its largeness..." Yy62.4, Mills translation. A physical fire cannot expand the mind, or give understanding. Truth can. So we see that this ancient text was using fire as an allegory for Truth.

The Divine is Truth (*asha*) personified in thought, word and action (which is Wisdom ~ an enlightened existence). And Truth is the path, and the reward for taking that path.⁹ Later Avestan texts say (more than once),

(There is) one path, that of truth; all others (are) non-paths', my translation,
aevo pantau, yo ashahe; vispe anyaesham apantam
Yy72.11; *Visperad* 24.3.

So fire, as a symbol of Truth, enlightenment, became a central part of religious rituals.

What is the name of the Divine in Zoroastrianism?

In Zoroastrianism there are no images of the Divine. The names of the Divine reveal Zarathushtra's perception of Its nature. Zarathushtra most often calls the Divine Wisdom (*mazda*), then Lord (*ahura*), and a few times Wisdom (the) Lord (*mazda-ahura*), which later was standardized into the name *Ahura Mazda*.¹⁰ In the Gathas, Zarathushtra uses 'Lord' (*ahura*) in the sense of One who has acquired lordship over the qualities that make a being divine ("[...for the very Wise Master \[ahura-\] of good thinking ...](#)" Y30.1; "[...Lord \[ahura-\] of the word and deed stemming from good \[mainyu- 'way of being'\] ...](#)" Y45.8).¹¹

Does Zarathushtra teach a belief in one God ?¹²

He does. "[...I choose \(only\) Thy teachings,...](#)" Y46.3. He teaches that the Divine is wholly good. So more than 1,000 years later, certain Zoroastrian philosophers, wondering about how evil originated, raised the point that a wholly good deity could not create 'evil', so they speculated that there must have been 2 uncreated beings ~ one all good, who is responsible for the good in existence, and one all evil who is responsible for the evil in existence.¹³ By that time, the Avestan language (in which the Gathas are composed) was no longer understood. So they no longer were aware of Zarathushtra's views on the origins of 'evil'.¹⁴

Zarathushtra's notion of the Divine is not that of a human like being who is just more powerful. Nor is it that of a Being that is separate and apart from the rest of existence, who is and was always perfect, but (for some unexplained reason) created an imperfect existence ~ a mix of 'good' and 'bad' qualities and preferences.¹⁵ In the Gathas the Divine is in-dwelling.

Does Zarathushtra believe in the Devil ?¹⁶

The Gathas make no mention of the 'Devil' or 'demons'. The later texts feature a chief Devil and subordinate devils. In Avestan texts the chief 'Devil' was called Angra Mainyu, in Pahlavi texts, Ahriman. Both these names have the same meaning ~ a way of being, that is 'harmful, hate-filled, inimical, pain-causing'. And the name of each subordinate 'devil' was a human vice ~ Rage, Malice, Slander, Greed, Deceiver, (etc.).

If we look past the image of the 'Devil', and his subordinate 'demons' to the bad qualities that are their names, it is easy to see that originally they were allegories indicating that a harmful, hate-filled, inimical, pain-causing mind or way of being, generates anger, malice, and all the other vices, wrongs, that were the names of subordinate demons. This is confirmed in a Pahlavi text which, after enumerating the names of many of these demons, says that,

["Various new demons arise from the various new sins the creatures may commit, and are produced for such purposes..."](#).

Another Pahlavi text says, that the Devil (as a living being) does not exist and has never existed. But with the passage of time, allegories tend to be taken literally and (centuries after Zarathushtra), many ancient Zoroastrians did indeed believe in the existence of the Chief Devil and his subordinate demons as living entities (and perhaps some believe so today as well).

Does the religion prohibit accepting those who wish to join it ?¹⁷

For the first 2,500 years of its history, the religion welcomed anyone who wished to join it but prohibited forced conversions. In the Gathas, Zarathushtra asks for Wisdom's help, so that he ["... might convert all the living."](#) Y31.3. Speaking of efforts to spread Wisdom's teachings, he says,

"...the family, the community together with the clan, entreated for the grace of Him, the Wise Lord, (saying:) 'Let us be Thy messengers,...' " Y32.1;
"Lord, let wisdom come in the company of truth across the earth!..." Y50.5.

An ancient prayer, composed more than 1,000 years after Zarathushtra says,
"Homage to the all knowing tolerator [Tolerant One], who sent through Zarathushtra ... teachings ... 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 ..." from the *Doa Nam Setayashne* prayer, Sethna translation.¹⁸

Another ancient prayer composed in the same era says,
"... May the religion of Zarathushtra be a source of glory unto all mortals..." from the *Doa Tandarosti*, prayer, Sethna translation.¹⁹

But forced conversions are forbidden. An ancient text cautions, that if a man converts to the wisdom-worshipping religion, he should not force his wife to convert. He should not stop supporting her. Her freedom to choose was respected.

After the Arab invasion of Iran in about 650 CE, Zoroastrians were persecuted almost to extinction, and accepting anyone who wished to convert from the religion of the invaders which was imposed throughout Iran, was punished by the death and destruction of all concerned and sometimes their families, and communities as well. So to survive, Zoroastrians adopted a policy of non-acceptance. Those Zoroastrians who fled to India, took this tradition with them, and it continued to be practiced in India long after the reason for it no longer existed. But many Zoroastrian communities in diaspora are reverting to the original teaching of accepting those who wish to join the religion.

What is Zarathushtra's understanding of Truth (*asha*)?²⁰

Central to Zarathushtra's thought is Truth (*asha*). In the Gathas, Truth (*asha*) is the nature of the Divine, the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path. Its meaning includes factual truths as well as the truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ all that is good, right.²¹ There is no one word in languages today that captures the meaning of *asha*. So we need to understand what he means by this word that has been translated as "truth". And we need to keep its full meaning in mind when we read "truth" in quotations from the Gathas and later texts.

Zarathushtra speaks of Truth in the existences of matter (the material existence) and mind (the abstract existence of mind/heart/spirit). He speaks of "... the attainments of both existences ~ yes, of matter as well as of mind ~ those attainments befitting truth [*asha*] through which one might set Thy supporters in happiness." Y28.2.

In the material existence, Truth is all that is correct (factually). It includes the factual truths of our universe, the laws that order existence, ~ the laws of mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry etc. Speaking about various natural phenomena, Zarathushtra says "These things indeed and others I wish to know,..." Y44.3. And throughout the long history of Zoroastrianism, knowledge and learning have been highly valued.

In the abstract existence, the Truths of mind/heart/spirit are also all that is correct (right), which in the Gathas is equated with being beneficial, good, and includes such qualities as integrity, honesty, lovingkindness, generosity, compassion, friendship, reason, justice (as in being fair), etc.

Truth is an idea. An ideal. Its personification is the nature of the Divine which is described as having the following 7 qualities ~

- (1) the wholly beneficial way of being (*spenta mainyu*), which is
- (2) the true (correct, good) order of existence (Truth *asha*), comprising
- (3) its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu manah*),
- (4) its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spenta armaiti*),
- (5) its good rule (*vohu xshathra*), all of which comprise
- (6) a perfected existence (*haurvatat*) ~ one that is wholly, completely good in which there is no admixture of untruth (falsehood, wrong, evil),
- (7) an existence that is not bound by mortality (*ameretat* 'non-deathness').²²

This personification of the true (correct, good) order of existence (Truth) is Wisdom (*mazda*), an enlightened state of being ~ the Lord (*ahura*) who has acquired lordship over these qualities that make a being divine.

Zarathushtra sees that man presently (but imperfectly) has all of these divine qualities except for the last two ~ completeness and non-deathness; and he says that man is capable of attaining them all completely, perfectly.²³ So in his thought, man is not born sinful, incapable of redeeming himself. Man is born with a mix of divine qualities and their opposites; and his salvation (from untruth) is in his own hands ~ with mutual loving help from the Divine and all that exists.

The search for Truth, and the freedom to choose.²⁴

If man has these divine qualities imperfectly, incompletely, how are we to know, in a given situation, what is Truth and what is not? Zarathushtra's answer is simple. We have to search for Truth ~ on-going ~ a search from which he does not exempt himself,

"... as long as I shall be able and be strong, so long shall I look in quest of truth [*asha*]" Y28.4;

" Truth, shall I see thee, as I continue to acquire both good thinking and the way to the Lord..." Y28.5.

The "way to the Lord" is the (incremental) path of Truth. The more we search for and follow Truth, the more we understand and acquire it.

The search for Truth in the existences of matter and mind/heart/spirit, enables:

- (1) on-going discoveries about the physical universe and the laws which order it, and
- (2) an on-going evolution in our perceptions of what is true, right, good (correct), which allows us to recognize obsolescence in various cultural and generational thinking and practices. It is then up to us to have the courage to make on-going changes that are in accord with Truth. In the Gathas, except for condemning fact-specific things that are intrinsically wrong (such as murder, theft, deceit, greed, cruelty, predatory violence, corruption, tyranny, bondage, etc.) there are no fact-specific mandates embalmed in the perceptions of a few thousand years BCE, regarding what is true or false, good or bad, right or wrong.²⁵

Does Zarathushtra tell us how to search for Truth?

The Gathas offer guidance on how to search for Truth. In those ancient times, books were non-existent (or scarce) and knowledge was transmitted vocally ~ "through the ear". The Gathas tell us to listen with our ears to what is intrinsically most good (*vahishta*); and then reflect with a light filled mind before arriving at conclusions (Y30.2). This advice generated a popular phrase in later texts which speak of,

'wisdom acquired by the ear, and the wisdom within', my translation.²⁶

Wisdom acquired by the ear is what we learn from others. It comes from many sources. It could be the teachings of great souls (like Zarathushtra); or something in a song we hear on the radio while driving; or something a friend (or enemy!) tells us; or something we read in a poem, or a novel. Whatever the source,

we should listen with an open (but not vacant) mind to whatever is intrinsically most good (*vahishta*); and then consult the wisdom within, before making our choices, "... man by man for himself..." Y30.2. The Gathas teach individual responsibility (and Avestan uses 'man' generically to include all mankind).

The freedom to make our own choices is an essential part of mental/emotional/spiritual growth. Will we make mistakes? Surely. It is better to learn from our own mistakes, than to unquestioningly live the mistakes of others. A slave mentality does not lead to wisdom/Wisdom.

Does Zarathushtra say what choices are 'correct'?

Not in a fact-specific way. But the Gathas offer guidance. A person who chooses correctly is described ~ not as 'just', not even as 'righteous', but as beneficent (*hudah*), "... the beneficent [*hudah*] have correctly chosen ..." Y30.3. *Hudah* (from *hu* 'good' and *da-* 'to give, etc.) literally means 'a beneficent good giving'. The dictionary defines 'beneficence' as a bountiful generosity, springing from goodness, lovingkindness, which gives what is good.²⁷ So on the path of spiritual growth, making choices that are 'just', and 'right', are good first steps.

But an even higher step is generosity, lovingkindness.²⁸

In Zarathushtra's thought, is the Divine a part of all that exists ?²⁹

Opinions differ. The dictionary defines 'immanentism' as "any of several theories according to which God or an abstract mind or spirit pervades the world." The Gathas do not specifically address the issue of immanence ~ one way or the other. But many Zoroastrians, (including some well known ancient and more recent high priests), think that the Gathas and later texts imply that the Divine is immanent in all that exists.

Fire is a metaphor for an enlightened existence which is the existence of the Divine. And two later texts speak of the fire in all things ~ in plants, in animals, in man, in the world itself. A Pahlavi high priest, *Zadsparam*, speaks of 6 material elements into all of which, originally, fire was diffused,

"first, the sky; ... second, water; ... third, earth; ... fourth, plants; ... fifth, animals; ... sixth, mankind. Fire was in all, diffused originally through the six substances ..." *Zadsparam*, 1.20 - 21,

"... the Propitious fire itself in heaven (*garodman*) ... its propitiousness is this, that all the kinds are of its nature." *Zadsparam*, 11.1 - 2, E. West translation.

In the Gathas, and later texts, each of the 7 qualities which describe the nature of the Divine is linked with metaphors that are aspects of the material existence. And completeness (*haurvatat*), ~ the perfected personification of Truth (a quality of the Divine that man can attain),³⁰ is linked with water. When separate bodies of water are brought together, they form one body of water. The separateness no longer exists. And the same is true of fire. When separate fires are brought together, they become one fire.

There is much (implied) evidence in the Gathas that Zarathushtra sees all of existence (including the Divine) as one whole; and that the difference between the Divine and the rest of existence is that the Divine is a union of the fragments of existence that have become perfected, whereas the rest of us are not (yet!).³¹ But each person is free to decide whether to believe that the Divine is a part of all that exists or separate from it.

What is the purpose of life?³²

The purpose of life is spiritual evolution. It is the long, slow process of changing our mixed (good/bad; right/wrong; true/false) natures until we personify the truths of mind/heart/spirit completely, an enlightend state of being ~ an existence that is healed from untruth, from all that is false, wrong, (predatory,

cruel, harmful, hate-filled, inimical, greedy, ignorant, pain-causing etc.). This process of spiritual evolution is both individual and collective ~ encompassing existence as a whole.

The matrix for the perfecting process is the material existence which generates the many experiences that enable changing from a mixed state of being to the wholly good end ~ the true (correct, good) order of existence (Truth) personified. This good end in later texts is called *frasho.kereiti* which derives from a term in the Gathas that means 'making existence healed, (by) forwarding it to Truth'.³³

The good end ~ a healed existence ~ is not just a hope. In the Gathas and all later texts, the eventual attainment of the good end by all, is a certainty. Yet Zarathushtra teaches the freedom to choose. A seeming paradox which he resolves as follows.

In his thought, the acquisition of wisdom is experience based. These experiences include the law of consequences ~ that we reap what we sow, that everything we do comes back to us. When the 'good' we do comes back to us, it reinforces our preferences for what is good. When the 'bad' things we do come back to us, it is not for punishment. It is for enlightenment. This evolution to the good end is inevitable, in part because we are free to make choices and experience the consequences of such choices. Even the failure to choose is a choice.

So all our experiences ~ earned and unearned, the 'good' and 'bad' ones ~ help to increase our understanding, our empathy, our compassion. In a thousand and one small steps, our experiences change our 'bad/wrong' preferences ~ not from fear of punishment, but because that is not the way we want to be. No matter how 'bad' an experience is (whether caused by natural calamities, the wrongful choices of others, or reaping what we sow) good will eventually come from it ~ a step forward towards the good end ~ confirming Zarathushtra's original premise that existence is indeed ordered in a good, beneficial, way (*asha*).

But we cannot make it alone. To make it, we all have to both give and receive loving help ~ from the Divine, man, other life forms, existence as a whole. Mutual loving help is an essential requirement for attaining the good end.³⁴ It helps to break the cycles of hatred generating hatred, abuse generating abuse. The Pahlavi high priest *Zadsparam* states that "mutual assistance" is the 3d requirement for the healing of existence.³⁵

In the Gathas, a 'savior' or 'benefitter' (*saoshyant*) is described as every being who translates Wisdom's teachings into words and actions, which results in 'salvation' from untruth ~ from all that is false, wrong, ~ salvation not just for one's self but for existence as a whole (of which each of us is a part).³⁶

An unknown ancient teacher of the religion (who must have been a genius!) wanted to make these ideas easy for people to understand and implement in everyday life. So s/he³⁷ invented a simple maxim that has become one of the defining sound bytes of the religion:

Good thoughts, good words, good deeds.

Today, some Zoroastrians shrug this off as 'just ethics'. But that ancient teacher was so much wiser.

This simple little maxim expresses the personification (in thought, word and action) of the true, correct, wholly good, order of existence (*asha vahishta*) ~ which is the nature of the Divine, the path to the Divine (enabling the good end, fulfilling the purpose of life), and the reward for taking that path.

Each time we think a good thought, say a good word, do a good deed, in that moment we bring the divine to life ~ in our selves, and in our world.

This little maxim also expresses Zarathushtra's way to worship the Divine ~ with Its own qualities, each of which is implemented in thought, word, action,³⁸

"... I shall always worship ... you, Wise Lord, with truth and the very best thinking [*vahishta manah* 'most

good thinking'] and with their rule..." Y50.4;

"I shall try to glorify Him for us ... with prayers of [*armaiti*], ..." Y45.10. Prayers of *armaiti* are prayers of thoughts, words and actions that embody Truth ("...Through its actions, [*armaiti*] gives substance to the truth..." Y44.6). Why does Zarathushtra says for us? Because whether a person prays in words, or with thoughts and actions, he prays not just for himself, but for all that exists.

A later (but still ancient) prayer asks the Divine to take our prayers into Its treasury, to be distributed to all who need prayers.³⁹

So we worship the Divine in the temple of life, with each good thought, word and action ~ in our homes, in the business world, in academia, in government, in the practice of our professions, in our treatment of other life forms, in our treatment of the environment. A 'living' worship, in every sense of the word.

It is true that a thought, a word, an action, however good, is a momentary thing. But each such moment has a ripple effect beyond its own immediate existence. And all such moments, collectively, have an exponential effect ~ healing existence (with Truth *asha*) from the pain, grief, suffering, brought about by all the many falsehoods and wrongs that are the opposite of the true (correct, good) order of existence (*asha*).

So this simple little maxim ~ good thoughts, good words, good actions ~ expresses the nature of the Divine, the way to worship, the path to follow (enabling spiritual evolution, the purpose of life), and the good end ~ a personification of the true (correct, good) order of existence.

Indeed, one of the terms for the good end ~ the ultimate 'good' reward ~ in both the Gathas and later texts, is an existence that is the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness ~ the "most good existence" (*ahu vahishta*) Y44.2 (a state of being), which a later Pazand text describes as good thoughts, good words and good actions (Avestan *vahishta* 'most good' became the Pazand *vahesht*, which E. W. West translates as 'heaven').

And heaven (*vahesht*) is first Humat (good thoughts), and second Hukht (good words), and third Hvaresht (good deeds)." E. W. West translation.⁴⁰

Does Zarathushtra teach reincarnation ?⁴¹

Opinions differ. Neither the Gathas, nor any surviving (authenticated) ancient text expressly states that there is, or is not, such a thing as reincarnation. But in the history of the religion, there were massive destructions of texts caused by military invasions and religious intolerance. A later text says there were 3 large Avestan texts devoted to commentary on the Gathas.⁴² None of them has survived.

Some Zoroastrians think that reincarnation is not part of the religion. Others think that it is necessarily implied in both the Gathas and certain later texts for the following reasons.

All ancient texts agree that we evolve spiritually to a wholly good, perfected existence. Yet no one at the end of one lifetime is wholly good, spiritually perfect. So if this teaching is true, there would have to be multiple other occasions for the perfecting process to continue until it is complete.

All ancient texts agree that the Divine is wholly good, that His qualities include lovingkindness, caring, being just (as in being 'fair'). Yet there are wide disparities in the qualities of individual human lives ~ long/short; health/sickness (and disabilities); wealth/poverty; happiness/suffering; opportunities/lack of them (etc.). If each person has only one life, then the Divine could not possibly be just ~ let alone loving, generous, caring. But if each person has to experience all that there is to experience (with mutual, loving help) through multiple life times as part of the perfecting process, that paradigm is consistent with the Divine being loving, caring, just (as in 'fair'), etc. These multiple life times may, or may not, be limited to

this earth. We simply don't know. As a modern high priest, Dastur N. D. Minochehr-Homji, said in his Chicago lectures: How can we limit the Divine to this one place, earth?

A Pahlavi text somewhat ambiguously says the following, "... the body is created [given] only for activity;⁴³ hence the conclusion is this, that the soul (ruban) is created [given] before and the body after. And both of them changed from the shape of a plant into the shape of man, and the breath (nismo) went spiritually into them, which is the soul (ruban)..." E. W. West translation. The Pahlavi high priest *Zadsparam* expresses an almost identical teaching, "... they changed from the shape of a plant into the shape of man, and the glory went spiritually into them." E. W. West translation. These two Pahlavi texts were written in about the 9th century CE, to record and preserve the older traditions and beliefs of the religion.⁴⁴ It was not until roughly 400 years later, in the 13th century CE, that the Sufi poet Rumi said something similar in a poem.

"I died as a mineral and became a plant,
I died as a plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was Man.

Why should I fear? When was I less by dying? ..." A. J. Arberry translation.

However, the Gathas do not say (nor even imply) that in Zarathushtra's thought, being human is necessarily a "higher" level of existence than the others.⁴⁵ From what I see in the Gathas (and certain later texts), I think that each category of existence ~ human, animal, plant, whatever ~ simply has a different set of 'tools' (qualities, capabilities) which enable the experiences required for an aspect of spiritual growth. So when I, as a human, depart this life, my next time round may be to exist as some other category of physical existence ~ one which has the capabilities and experiences that I need at that stage, to help me grow spiritually. But that is just my opinion.

What is Zarathushtra's understanding of 'heaven' ?⁴⁶

In the Gathas the ultimate 'good' reward (which our societies today call 'heaven') is a state of being, not a place. In a thousand and one ways, the Gathas (and an ancient prayer) tell us that the reward for Truth is Truth itself.⁴⁷ He calls the 'good' reward, by many other names, a few of which are the "most good existence (*ahu vahishta*)" Y44.2; the "most good thinking" Y30.4; the "House of Good Thinking" Y32.15; the "House of Song" Y51.15. These are not separate 'heavens'. These terms are different ways of describing one state of being. The "House of Good Thinking" is a state of being that 'houses' the complete comprehension of truth ~ enlightenment; the "House of Song" a state of being that 'houses' the bliss, the high, we experience when singing, or listening to, beautiful music; the "most good existence" a state of being that is intrinsic goodness in the superlative degree;⁴⁸ one that is no longer bound by mortality (non-deathness, *ameretat*-) because the perfecting process is complete.⁴⁹

In many later Avestan texts, a standard description of the 'good' reward is the "most good existence of the truth-possessing (*vahishtem ahum ashaonam*) ~ light, all-happiness (*raochanghem vispo.xvathrem*)", a description which expresses the Gatha idea that the 'good' reward is the totality of a state of being that is wholly good, joyful, enlightened ~ a personification of the true (correct, good) order of existence (*asha*- which is the existence of the Divine).

There is a lovely term for the ultimate good end ('heaven') in both later Avestan and Pahlavi texts ~ "endless light(s)". And in a Pahlavi text, the Divine is called "endless light".⁵⁰

What does this tell us about Zarathushtra's idea of (what today is called) 'heaven'?

It is not a place. It is a state of being that is a wholly generous, wholly good lovingkindness, a state of joyful enlightenment (which is Wisdom, *mazda*), a union of all perfected fragments of existence.⁵¹

Zarathushtra does not think in terms of 'this life' and 'the afterlife'.

He thinks in terms of

(1) a long period of spiritual evolution in mortal, material, existence ~ the matrix for the perfecting process ~ which ends in

(2) a wholly good, perfected existence that is no longer bound by mortality ~ one that personifies Truth ~ the Divine.⁵²

But with the passage of centuries, in some later Avestan texts the 'good' reward became a state of being (most a good existence *vahista- ahv*) ~ in a pleasant place.⁵³ And by the time of the even later Pahlavi texts, composed after destructive wars in which texts were burned, the learned killed, and much knowledge lost, only a very few texts describe the 'good' reward as a wholly good state of being. In most of them, it had become a good place (called *vahesht*), which became the later Persian *behesht* 'heaven' as a place of reward ~ words which were derived from Avestan *vahishta* ~ intrinsic goodness in the superlative degree).⁵⁴

What is Zarathushtra's understanding of 'hell' ?

No Avestan text ~ not the Gathas nor any later Avestan text (composed during Avestan times) ~ contains any mention of damnation to a place of tortures and torment in an afterlife in which fallible beings are punished for wrongdoings.⁵⁵ In the Gathas, salvation is not being saved from damnation and a hell of tortures.

Salvation is being saved from what is false, wrong ~ untruth.⁵⁶

In the Gathas, the 'bad' reward for making 'bad' choices (which our societies today call 'hell') is a temporary state of being in *mortal* existence ~ "... a long lifetime of darkness ... woe" Y31.20; the "House of Worst Thinking" Y32.13; the 'House of Deceit' Y49.11, indicating a state of being that 'houses' an understanding that is wrong, false, ignorant. An unhappy, unenlightened (dark), deceived state of being.⁵⁷

But after the Arab invasion of Iran, having lived under the dominant religion of the invaders for some centuries, a few Pahlavi texts show the 'bad' reward as a temporary place of tortures in an afterlife, in which people are punished for wrongdoing. Yet even these texts still (inconsistently) contain echoes of the original teaching ~ that the 'bad' reward is a deceived, 'bad', state of being ~ an existence of 'bad' thoughts, words and actions.

"And hell [*dozhakh* 'bad existence'] is first Dushmat (evil thoughts), and second Duzhukht (evil words), and third Duzhvareshht (evil deeds); with the fourth footstep, the wicked man arrives at that which is the darkest hell [*dôzhakh* 'bad existence']..." E. W. West translation.⁵⁸

Does Zarathushtra teach that the material existence must be renounced to achieve spirituality ?⁵⁹

He does not. Zarathushtra does not teach asceticism. The pleasures and joys of our material existence are not ultimate objectives, but they are not 'bad' (as long as they are not used to harm others or ourselves). Nor are they rejected. Quite the contrary.

In his thought, the material existence serves an indispensable purpose. It provides the arena which enables the experiences necessary for spiritual growth, and (eventually) a perfected spiritual existence, both individually and collectively (encompassing existence as a whole).

Just as a musician uses material instruments to express the music in his soul, just as an artist uses material things (paints, canvas, stone, wood, metals) to express his artistic vision, in the same way the abstract qualities of the divine are brought to life, given form, given substance, through the medium of our material world, using material tools, material thoughts, words and actions.

I am touched by the generosity, (and the playful paradox) of an order of existence in which we have material tools to enable spiritual growth, and which material tools are crafted in such a way that the process of achieving spirituality includes moments of pleasure and joy.

So the material existence is used to advance the good, and in the process, is enjoyed, celebrated. For example, the ancient Pazand Zoroastrian wedding ceremony, which includes advise to brides and grooms on how to live their lives in accordance with the religion, states "... Create wealth from your own honest work and integrity. ... Do not look down upon those who are not so well off. Help them with your own wealth ...", translated (from the Farsi version) by Shahin Bekhradnia.

Many good people suffer poverty, and other hardships. These difficulties are part of the experiences necessary to increase understanding, and therefore are an essential part of the soul refining process. However, one of Zarathushtra's significant ideas is that as a general proposition (except for the difficulties that are soul sculpting experiences), in the long run we cannot be happy, we cannot prosper, if we are out of sync with the true (correct, good) order of existence (*asha*).

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

"... truth [*asha*] which prospers the creatures,..." Y33.11, Insler 1975;

"...the rule of good thinking, through the actions of which the creatures allied with truth [*asha*] do prosper..." Y43.6, Insler 1975.

Dishonesty and wrongdoing may bring short term gains, but in the long run, they cannot bring happiness, they cannot bring prosperity.⁶⁰ And experience validates this idea (contrary to today's conventional wisdom). Examples abound throughout history ~ ancient and modern. Here are a few.⁶¹

The establishment of factually accurate standards (an aspect of Truth) ~ in weights, in measurements, in quality controls ~ enabled a reliance that lifted trade from unregulated transactions in small markets, to the prosperity of national and international trade, which relies on such (factually) accurate standards.

The rule of law which ensures that the same laws are applicable to all and will be enforced with integrity, with justice, with fairness, (an aspect of the rule of Truth) ~ that no one is outside the protection of law, and no one is above the law ~ generates the confidence that life liberty and property will not be forfeited arbitrarily, enabling the risks, the investments, the expansion of trade, which creates jobs and investment returns ~ prosperity.

Keeping one's word (Truth) to friends and enemies,⁶² generates the kind of reliance (trust) that is key to enabling success and prosperity in the infinite variety of economic, national security, (and personal!) interactions and relationships in which we engage ~ with partners, with business associates, with friends, with enemies, with individuals, associations, communities, nations.

Blessing our world.

Zarathushtra's primary focus is not on an afterlife. It is on how we live our lives, here, now ~ using our minds/hearts/spirits to create an order that is true, honest, good, right, generous, loving, just, (as in being fair) etc. for all that exists.

It is not enough for us to ask the Divine to bless us. We have to bless each other and our world. It is not enough for us to increase our own goodness, our own individual well-being. We have to increase goodness, well-being, in our world ~ for other people, for other life forms, for the environment (while respecting each person's freedom to choose). With some exceptions in later texts,⁶³ this emphasis on acting for the betterment of our world, has been a feature of the religion throughout its long history.

In the 6th century BCE, Cyrus the Great ended frequent and destructive tribal wars, by bringing (comparative) peace throughout an empire of 22 nations which he administered in a beneficial way that increased prosperity for the nations under his rule. He respected and advanced the well-being of their different religions and cultures ~ a step beyond mere tolerance. In the Gathas, "bondage" is evil (Y29.1). Cyrus freed the Jews and many other peoples,⁶⁴ who were enslaved in Babylon. He allowed all such freed peoples to return to their own lands, and gave them funds from his Treasury to rebuild their temples and sanctuaries;⁶⁵ policies that were continued by his successor Darius I.⁶⁶

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, J. N. Tata and his family started a highly successful industrial empire in which the employees of Tata Steel (then called the Tata Iron & Steel Company) were provided with affordable housing, free health care, and other benefits ~ policies which the Tata businesses have continued to this day ~ a modern perspective on Zarathushtra's notion of 'good rule' (and the prosperity it brings).

Zoroastrians in Iran and India have built and endowed schools, universities, hospitals, that are open to all ~ not just to Zoroastrians. In India their charitable foundations also help activities that protect the environment.

And today in North America, Zoroastrian adults and children organize to engage in many community activities, such as environmental clean ups, planting trees, helping the homeless, helping with food banks, providing clothing and school supplies for children who need them, helping in small and large ways to bring about the betterment of our world.

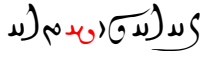

Zarathushtra's teachings are so relevant to the many problems that plague our planet today. We can have the best form of government, and the best laws, in the world but they don't mean a thing unless they are implemented from day to day, by individuals making choices that are true, honest, right, good ~ in thought, word and action.

All of the values we cherish - the freedom to speak, to think for ourselves, to make choices, values such as integrity, reason, justice, generosity, goodness, lovingkindness, friendship, compassion - all of these values are implicit in the notion of the true (correct, good) order of existence (Truth *asha*). These are not things that are handed to us automatically, free of commitment. These are not things we can take for granted. In his thought, these are qualities of existence that we have to create, and re-create, give life to, give substance to, over and over, with our choices in thought, word and action, as long as we have life. Because if we don't, we lose them. They cease to have reality in our societies and in our beings. It's that simple.

It sometimes takes courage to choose Truth. We sometimes pay a bitter price for so doing (in the short run). But if we care about our communities, our nation ~ the world our children will inherit from us ~ we have to choose what is true, right, good, with each thought, word and action. Choosing truth is what heals existence.

"... Therefore may we be those who shall heal this world ! ..." Y30.9.

* * * * *

¹ His name in ancient (Avestan) texts is (reading from right to left)  ~ pronounced Za-ra-thush-tra, with the emphasis on the 3d syllable in which the 'u' is pronounced short as in 'look', and with each 'a' pronounced short as in 'fun'. The Avestan letter  is pronounced 'sh', but because its transliterated form is š (which also is pronounced 'sh'), many people pronounce the name Zarathustra (with an s sound instead of an 'sh' sound), which is not correct according to the Avestan script. According to Vasunia, the form 'Zoroaster' comes from the Latin transcription of the Greek 'Zoroastres' although variant spellings are found in Greek and Latin, Vasunia 2007 p. 52.

² There are no capital letters in Avestan script. And in this chapter, to keep things simple, I have not used the transliterated symbols which linguists use when converting Avestan letters into English script. Transliterated symbols, and the key purposes they serve, are detailed in *Overview: Avestan Script, Pronunciation & Genesis*.

³ The Pahlavi term *din-i-behi* has been translated universally as 'the good religion', which is not linguistically accurate, and moreover (incorrectly) implies an exclusiveness ~ that this religion is the Good Religion (whereas others are not). A more accurate (more literal) translation is 'the religion of goodness', so named because of the central role which goodness plays in Zarathushtra's thought ~ detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*.

⁴ *Part Four: Zarathushtra's Date and Place*, discusses the various dates given for Zarathushtra by ancient writers, and also some factual evidence from ancient Zoroastrian texts, and some linguistic and archeological evidence which narrows (somewhat) the probable range of the time period in which he lived.

⁵ Quotations from the Gathas in this chapter are from the Insler 1975 translation (see in *General Overview & Orientation: the chapter on Translations*).

⁶ Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of The Cow & Its Network*.

⁷ Detailed, in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*; and *Joy, Happiness, Prosperity*. And in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

⁸ Detailed in *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*.

⁹ Detailed in *Part Two: A Question Of Reward & The Path*.

¹⁰ That Wisdom (*mazda*-) is Zarathushtra's most used name for the Divine, and his use of *ahura*- and *mazda- ahura* are detailed in *Part Three: Evolution of the Name(s) Ahura, Mazda*.

¹¹ Detailed with more quotations in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*; and in *Part Two: The Lords & The Equations of Yasna 31.4*.

¹² Detailed in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*, and also *The Identity Of The Divine*.

¹³ This view of 2 uncreated beings ('gods') ~ one all good and one all evil ~ is found in some later texts. This view is argued in some detail in the Pahlavi text, *Sikand Gumanig Vihar*, SBE Vol. 24. But the evidence of the Gathas shows that this was not Zarathushtra's view, detailed in *Part One: The Beneficial Way Of Being, Spenta Mainyu*; and *Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*; and *Good & Evil*.

¹⁴ Zarathushtra's understanding of the origin of evil is not expressly stated. But we can infer it based on what he does expressly say, detailed in *Part One: The Identity of the Divine*; and in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation; The Puzzle Of The Singular & The Plural; A Question of Immanence; Did Wisdom Choose Too?* and other chapters.

Today, many students and scholars of Zarathushtra's teachings agree that he did not teach the existence of 2 uncreated beings ('gods') ~ one all good and the other all evil. Yet, without any evidence and indeed contrary to the evidence, some some scholars have contended that in Zarathushtra's thought, the Divine ('God') created both good and evil ~ to what purpose, they have never satisfactorily explained. These contentions are not consistent with Zarathushtra's

thought, and indeed show a lack of understanding of one of his most revolutionary changes from his culture's perception of the Divine, detailed in *Part One: The Nature Of The Divine*, and the many chapters in *Parts One* and *Two*.

¹⁵ Detailed in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*, and *The Identity of the Divine*.

¹⁶ Detailed in *Part One: Does The Devil Exist ?* which also discusses the names of subordinate demons.

¹⁷ Detailed in *Part One: A Teaching For All Mankind*.

¹⁸ Sethna 1980 reprint, *Khordeh Avesta*, p. 63. The Khordeh Avesta prayers were probably composed during Sasanian times, but many of them include quotations from the Gathas and also other Avestan texts.

¹⁹ Sethna, 1980 reprint, *Khordeh Avesta*, p. 173.

²⁰ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*; and *The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*.

²¹ There is no one English word for the Avestan word *manah*. Based on the contexts in which the word is used in the Gathas, it means the full spectrum of conscious capabilities ~ intellectual, creative, emotional, insightful, etc. For example, Zarathushtra calls the ultimate good end ~ the '[house of good thinking](#)', as well as the '[house of song](#)'. These 2 terms describe one state of being that 'houses' good intellectual, creative, and emotional functions. For a more detailed explanation of *vohu manah*, as used in the Gathas, see *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*.

²² In *Part One*, the meanings of each of these 7 qualities of the Divine (*amesha spenta*) are summarized in chapter 1:2 *Quick Definitions*, and are discussed and described in detailed (including the contradictory opinions of professional linguists and Zoroastrians who are not linguists) in chapters 1:3 through 1:10.

²³ Detailed in *Part One: Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*.

²⁴ Detailed in *Part One: The Search For Truth*; and *The Freedom To Choose*.

²⁵ Detailed in *Part One: Good & Evil*.

²⁶ Detailed in *Part One: Meditation & Contemplation*.

²⁷ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

²⁸ Detailed in *Part One: Love*.

²⁹ Detailed in *Part Two: A Question Of Immanence*, and other chapters cited therein.

³⁰ Detailed in *Part One: Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*.

³¹ Detailed in *Part One: The Identity of the Divine*; and *Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*; and In *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Singular & the Plural*; *A Question of Immanence*; and *Did Wisdom Choose Too?*

³² Detailed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*; *Molten, Glowing Metal*; and *The Puzzle of Creation*. That the process of spiritual evolution is both individual and collective is detailed in *Part One: Completeness & Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*.

³³ The later Avestan term *frasho.kereiti* is based on a Gatha term, both of which are explored in detail, in *Part Three: Heaven In Other Avestan Texts*.

³⁴ The concept of mutual, loving help, is detailed in many chapters throughout this website. But see particularly the following:

In *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*; and *The Angels Among Us*.

In *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*;

³⁵ Detailed in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

³⁶ Detailed in *Part One: A Question of Salvation*.

³⁷ We do not know the gender of the ancient teacher who invented this maxim ~ [good thoughts, words and actions](#). Avestan texts do not identify their authors, and more than one Avestan text recognizes that women were priests and also were teachers of the religion (detailed in *Part One: Gender Equality*). So this maxim could have been composed by either a man or a woman. This maxim in Avestan is *humata, huxta, huvarshata*. So its composer would have lived during Avestan times. It later became the Pahlavi *manashni, gavashni, kunashni*.

³⁸ Detailed in *Part One: Worship & Prayer*; and in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*.

³⁹ This idea of praying for all the living originated in the Gathas, but the example given is from a later text, discussed in *Part One: Seven Gems From The Later Texts*.

⁴⁰ From E. W. West 1871, *The Book of the Mainyo-i-khard*, Ch. 7 §§ 8 - 12, p. 140, translating this much later text.

⁴¹ Detailed in *Part One: Reincarnation*.

⁴² E. W. West, commenting on information contained in the Pahlavi text Dinkard 8, about older Avestan texts, SBE 37 p. 4, ft. 2.

⁴³ This thought echoes the two Gatha verses which are discussed in *Part Six: Yasna 31.11 and 12*, which demonstrates that the first part of this Pahlavi quotation shows knowledge of this aspect of Zarathushtra's teachings in the Gathas.

⁴⁴ E. W. West estimates (based on factual evidence) that the age of the earliest surviving forms of these two Pahlavi texts, as they exist today (having been copied and re-copied through the centuries) would likely have been in the 9th century CE. SBE 5, pp. xli - xliii.

⁴⁵ Indeed, if we look at the various material metaphors that Zarathushtra in the Gathas associates with each quality of the Divine (later called 'amesha spenta'), we cannot even imply that in his thought man was a 'higher' form of being than other life forms. However, by Pahlavi times, the material metaphors associated with the Divine and its qualities had become rigid and material man was associated with Wisdom Itself (and that excluded women, who were associated with the earth!), detailed in *Part Two: A Question of Immanence*. The gender equality which is so obvious and consistent in Avestan texts was absent in Pahlavi texts, detailed in *Part One: Gender Equality*.

⁴⁶ Detailed in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*; and *The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*.

⁴⁷ Detailed in *Part Two: A Question Of Reward & The Path*.

⁴⁸ Detailed in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*; and *The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*.

⁴⁹ Detailed in *Part One: Completeness & Non-Deathness*; and in *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge of Discerning*.

⁵⁰ *Bundahishn*, Ch. 1, § 5, E. W. West translation, SBE 5, p. 4. However by the time of the Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, a belief in Cosmic Dualism (two uncreated spirits) had become established ~ a belief we do not find in the Gathas. The Pahlavi understanding of 'heaven' and 'hell' is detailed in *Part Three: Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*.

⁵¹ See in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Singular & The Plural*.

⁵² Detailed in *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge of Discerning*.

⁵³ Detailed in *Part Three: Heaven In Other Avestan Texts*.

⁵⁴ Detailed in *Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*.

⁵⁵ Detailed in *Part Two: The Houses Of Paradise & Hell*; and *Part Three: The Absence Of Damnation & Hell In Other Avestan Texts*.

⁵⁶ Detailed in *Part One: A Question of Salvation*.

⁵⁷ Detailed in *Part Two: The Houses Of Paradise & Hell*.

⁵⁸ Detailed in *Heaven & Hell In Pazand & Pahlavi Texts*. This particular quotation is from the Pazand *Mainyo-ikhard*, E. W. West translation 1871.

The meanings of the following Pazand words are linked to the following Avestan meanings:

"Dozhakh" from GAv. *dushahu* 'bad existence' (E. W. West Glossary p. 63)

"Dushmat (evil thoughts)" from GAv. *duzh.manah* 'having bad thoughts' (Skjaervo 2006);

"Duzhukht (evil words)" from GAv. *dush/duzh* 'bad', and GAv. *uxdha* 'word', (Skjaervo 2006);

"Duzhvareshht (evil deeds)" from GAv. *duzh.vareshta* 'bad action' (which Skjaervo 2006 shows is related to *varz* 'to produce').

⁵⁹ See the following chapters in *Part One: Joy, Happiness, Prosperity; The Paradox of the Material and the Spiritual*; the last part of *Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*, and also *A Friendly Universe*.

⁶⁰ Detailed in *Part One: Joy, Happiness, Prosperity*.

⁶¹ In addition, we have the example of Enron which is discussed in *Part One: Joy, Happiness, Prosperity*; and *The Paradox of the Individual & The Community*.

⁶² One of the pre-Zarathushtrian deities of the Indo-Iranian tribes was named 'Mithra' (Ved. Mitra), which means 'contract'. In Indo-Iranian times, important material things were thought to have spiritual essences ('deities' for want of a better word). And the deity Mithra was the spiritual essence of the contract (keeping one's word).

The author of a later Avestan text (composed centuries after Zarathushtra), has Ahura Mazda (purportedly) telling Zarathushtra, never to break a contract, regardless of whether it is made with a truth-possessor or an untruth-possessor (Mihir Yasht, § 2), thus making the idea of keeping one's word a universal one ~ transcending the tribal mind-set of keeping one's word only with members of one's own community. Many later Avestan texts (including this one) were dedicated to pre-Zarathushtrian deities whom Zarathushtra rejected, but whose worship became syncretized with Zarathushtra's teachings. But even so, these later texts often contain elements of Zarathushtra's teachings (as well as many ideas that are totally inconsistent with the Gathas). This is discussed in *Part Four: The Syncretization*. For more details on important material things having spiritual essences, see *Part One: The Identity of the Divine*.

⁶³ By the time of many later texts, teachers of the religion had acquired a homocentric view of existence. "Good" was defined as what was good for man. And "bad" was defined as what was bad for man. So in their thinking, all parts of the material existence that "harmed" mankind, were considered "evil" ~ wolves, frogs, physical darkness, natural calamities such as drought, etc. were considered "evil". This view of the "good" and "evil" is very different from what we find in Zarathushtra's Gathas, detailed in *Part One: Good & Evil*.

⁶⁴ In the Cyrus Cylinder, we are told that in addition to freeing the Jews, Cyrus also freed the peoples of Zamban, Meturnu, Der and others from slavery in Babylon.

⁶⁵ This information is recorded in the Bible, (the books of Ezra, Isaiah and others), and in a translation of the Cyrus Cylinder at the British Museum website, which translation does not say that Cyrus 'worshipped' Marduk (as other translation have said) but that Cyrus held Marduk in awe (or respect).

⁶⁶ Detailed in clay tablets found in two areas of the Persepolis complex. The tablets are collectively called the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, and the Persepolis Treasury Tablets. Only a small fraction of them have been translated and published. Detailed in *Part Four: The Achaemenians, Good Rule & Zarathushtra*.