

## Love

It has often been asked: Where in Zarathushtra's thought does the notion of 'love' appear?

In English, this one word 'love' is used to describe so many different things ~ Divine love, parental love, the love of family members, the love of soulmates, the love of friends, the love that is generosity towards strangers and other life forms, and many other instances. In Avestan, there is no one-word equivalent, which covers so broad a spectrum of meanings. This fact (in part) has led some people to conclude that 'love' is not a part of Zarathushtra's thought ~ a conclusion that is far from the truth.

It is true that Zarathushtra places a high priority on the mind and thinking. But the meaning of 'mind' in English is limited to intellectual functions, whereas Zarathushtra uses *manah-* 'mind', 'thinking' in a much broader sense, to include the full spectrum of conscious human capabilities ~ intellectual functions as well as emotions, creativity, insight, and the other non-intellectual functions of our 'minds'.<sup>1</sup> The narrower definition of 'mind' and 'thinking' in English has contributed (in part) to the faulty conclusion that love is not a part of his thought.

The concept of love does indeed appear in Zarathushtra's teachings the way patterns of sunlight appear in a garden – throughout, and in great variety, each lovely in its own way. The evidence of the Gathas shows us that:

- \* love is a part of the true good order of existence (*aša-*).
- \* love is the nature of the Divine (which personifies the true order of existence).
- \* love is the basis of the relationship between man and the Divine.
- \* love is an ingredient in prayer,
- \* in how we worship,
- \* in making the right choices,
- \* in the path to the Divine,
- \* in salvation,
- \* and in our relationships with each other and with all that exists.

I would like to show you these patterns of sunlight in the garden of Zarathushtra's thought.

*Love as part of the true (correct) good order of existence, and the nature of the Divine.*

We have explored this idea in detail in other chapters,<sup>2</sup> so I will just give you a summary here. Zarathushtra describes the Divine, and His way of being (His *spənta- mainyu-*), as beneficent.

"...the Lord, beneficent through truth [*aša-*], ..." Y48:3, Insler 1975;

"... Him who is beneficent through His [*spənta- mainyu-*] to those who exist..." Y45:6, Insler 1975.

The dictionary defines beneficence as: "... active goodness, kindness, charity; bounty springing from purity and goodness."<sup>3</sup> The word 'charity' is used here in its older sense of loving.

A moment's reflection makes it clear that it is not possible to be good, kind, generous, to be filled with charity for others, without being loving. So the idea of 'beneficence' includes within it the notion of love.

There is an old-fashioned word, which captures very well the idea of "charity" in the definition of "beneficence". It is a good, generous, bountiful, lovingkindness.

To summarize: 'Beneficence' ~ a generous, bountiful, lovingkindness ~ is a central quality of the true (correct) good order of existence (*aša-*), and the nature of the Divine who personifies this order of existence.

*The Relationship between the Divine and all that exists.*

Love is the foundation of the relationship between the Divine and all that exists. The Gathas often mention Wisdom's love for mortals. It is expressed in terms of solicitude, compassion, support, protection and friendship.

*Solicitude* means loving care, concern. Zarathushtra describes the Divine as:

"... the One who offers solicitude ..." Y45:7, Insler 1975;

"... the glories of Him who offers solicitude ... the Wise Lord..." Y46:17, Insler 1975;

*Compassion:* In the Vohu Xshathra Gatha, Wisdom's good rule is, among other things, caring, compassionate. Teaching through questions which contain their own answers, Zarathushtra says, "Where shall there be protection instead of injury? Where shall mercy [*mərəždikā* 'compassion'] take place? Where truth [*aša-*] which attains glory? Where [*spənta- ārmaiti-* 'beneficial embodied truth']? Where the very best thinking? Where, Wise One, through Thy rule?" Y51:4, Insler 1975.

The GAv. word *mərəždikā* which Insler translates as "mercy" is translated as 'compassion' by other linguists.<sup>4</sup> I think 'compassion' more accurately conveys Zarathushtra's thought in using *mərəždikā* because the concept of 'mercy' as a reprieve from damnation is not relevant to his thought. Damnation in a hell of tortures is not a part of his teachings (unlike later Pahlavi texts).<sup>5</sup>

*Support, protection, help:* There are numerous verses in the Gathas in which Wisdom's love is expressed in terms of protection, support and help. But what is most interesting, is *how* he protects, supports, and helps. He does it through the true (correct), good order of existence (*aša-* which itself has 'lovingkindness' within its meaning), and its comprehension (good thinking). For example, "What help by truth [*aša-*] hast Thou for Zarathushtra who calls? What help by good thinking [*vohu- manah-*] has Thou for me ..."49:12, Insler 1975.

And the beautiful Yasna 34:7, "Wise One, where are those sincere ones who, through their possession of good thinking [*vohu- manah-*], make even immoral decrees and painful legacies disappear? I know none other than you. Therefore protect us in accord with truth [*aša-*]." 34:7, Insler 1975.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, the help, the support, the protection, which Wisdom offers is not the comforting certainty of a pacifier. He does not wrap us in a harm-free environment, safe and protected. His support, His protection, help us to grow through our difficulties. He gives us the tools to help ourselves and each other. These tools enable us to understand that the nature of the true order of existence is wholly good; with generous lovingkindness ever at hand to help us through the refiner's fire.<sup>7</sup>

In the later texts, Wisdom's divine attributes, the amesha spenta, were called angels. Zarathushtra shows us angels in a new light. Wisdom's angel-messengers, are His thoughts.<sup>8</sup> His protecting angels are truth

(*aša-*) and its comprehension (good thinking) ~ and also those who bring these qualities to life with their thoughts, words and actions: part-time angels, but all moving towards full time.

In later texts there is also the concept that each person has a guardian angel (*fravashi*). The meaning of *fravashi* has not been consistent in the long history of Zoroastrianism, but a respectable body of opinion holds that it means the Divine within.<sup>9</sup> Thus the *fravashi*-guardian angel is the Divine within that guides, helps, supports and protects us ~ with truth and its comprehension, good thinking. Stated another way, this Divine ~ the wisdom/Wisdom within ~ is the 'innate wisdom' mentioned in so many later texts.<sup>10</sup> So in addition to His solicitude and generosity, this wisdom/Wisdom within is our guardian angel.

*Friendship:* In the Gathas, the relationship between the Divine and man is neither patriarchal, nor authoritarian. It is not that of a Lord to his slaves, or a Ruler to the ruled,<sup>11</sup> or a Master to a servant, or even a Father to a child.<sup>12</sup> The relationship is that of a friend to a friend, or a beloved to a beloved, as we already have seen in some detail.<sup>13</sup> But here are two examples to refresh recollection:

"... I lament to Thee. Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend [*fryō*] should grant to a friend [*fryāi*]..." Y46:2, Insler 1975.

"... Someone like Thee, Wise One, should declare to me, his friend [*fryāi*], how reverence for your kind<sup>14</sup> is to be from the reverent person ..." Y44:1, Insler 1975.

Some scholars translate the applicable GAv. stem (*frya-*) as 'friend', others as 'beloved'.<sup>15</sup> Even if the stem *frya-* means 'friend', if we think about the idea behind the word 'friend' we see that it includes the notion of love.

Does this friendship, this lovingkindness, extend to other life forms? The Gathas do not specifically say so, but it is significant that the entity Zarathushtra chooses as an allegory for the beneficial-sacred in mortal existence (i.e. an existence governed (*xšaθra-*) by truth (*aša-*), its good comprehension (*vohu- manah-*), its beneficial embodiment (*spənta- ārmaiti-*)), is the (allegorical) cow,<sup>16</sup> which in Y29 complains about the cruelty, violence, fury, and bondage to which she has been subjected, and begs for nurture, which Wisdom promises.<sup>17</sup>

It is even more significant that in Y29, it is not suffering alone that is contrary to the true order of existence. The sufferings we experience sculpt our souls. They are necessary for spiritual growth, enabling transformation by increasing our understanding and changing, eliminating our 'bad' preferences to those that are wholly good, beneficial.<sup>18</sup> It is suffering without nurture, without loving help at hand to see us through the refiner's fire, that is contrary to the true order of existence.<sup>19</sup>

Returning to the question of whether lovingkindness extends to other life forms in Zarathushtra's thought: If indeed the Divine is immanent in all that exists,<sup>20</sup> the relationship with all that exists would, of necessity, have to be as loving as the relationship between the Divine and mankind. There could be no difference. But in practice, this is difficult to follow. We kill to eat. We kill disease producing life forms to survive. Perhaps the answer is, that if we have to kill or harm, we should do it as quickly and humanely as possible, to reduce suffering.

*Love in prayer and worship.*

In Prayer: 'lovingly' is the word Zarathushtra chooses to describe how he prays. He says "Thee ... do I lovingly entreat for the best for Frashaoshtra ... and for me ..." Y28:8, Insler 1975. And he tells

us that if a prayer has two ingredients, it will not be left wanting. These two ingredients are good purpose and love.

"...For I know that words deriving from good purpose and from love are not to be left wanting by you." Y28:10, Insler 1975.

*In Worship:* As with prayer, love is also an ingredient in the wider concept of worship. Zarathushtra tells us that we should worship the Divine with Its own qualities.

"... I shall always worship ... you, Wise Lord, with truth [*aša-*] and the very best thinking [*vahišta-manah-*] and with their rule." Y50:4, Insler 1975.

"I ... shall serve ... you Wise Lord with good thinking [*vohu- manah-*]..." Y28:2, Insler 1975.

"I shall try to glorify Him for us with prayers of [*ārmaiti-*]..." Y45:10, Insler 1975; prayers of *ārmaiti-* are prayers of thoughts, words and actions which embody the true, good order of existence.

If the true order of existence (*aša-*) includes the notion of beneficence, a generous lovingkindness, and if Zarathushtra worships Wisdom with truth (*aša-*) and its component parts (the amesha spenta), then his notion of worship would have to include beneficence, a generous, bountiful, lovingkindness. And (just in case we might miss the point) he specifically gives his kind of worship a foundation of love in Y51:22. Referring to the Lord Wisdom's divine qualities, (amesha spenta) Zarathushtra says that he will worship them with their own names, and serve them with love:

"I know in whose worship there exists for me the best [*vahišta-* '(the) most-good'],<sup>21</sup>

It is the Wise Lord, as well as those who have existed and (still) exist.

Them (all) shall I worship with their own names  
and I shall serve them with love." Y51:22, Insler 1975.

Insler has interpreted the phrase "... those who have existed and (still) exist..." as the immortal qualities of Wisdom (amesha spenta).<sup>22</sup> And he interprets the phrase "... Them (all) shall I worship with their own names..." in a ft. as follows: "That is, *I shall worship truth with truth, good thinking with good thinking, etc.*"<sup>23</sup> In Zarathushtra's thought, the amesha spenta are both a way to worship and are objects of worship, esteem and service.<sup>24</sup> And Insler's interpretation is supported by YAv. texts.<sup>25</sup>

It is worth noting that the phrase "...Them (all) shall I worship with their own names..." includes the names *ahura-* and *mazdā-*, so this verse tells us that we should worship the Lord, Wisdom with Its own names ~ by being *ahura-* and *mazdā-*, by (incrementally) acquiring lordship over (possessing completely, and being possessed completely by) the qualities of the Divine (amesha spenta) and by (incrementally) personifying Wisdom ~ an enlightened existence.<sup>26</sup>

One of the qualities of Wisdom in the Gathas, is being a pastor ~ nurturing, caring for existence. So it is good to remember that in worshipping the Divine by being *ahura-* and *mazdā-*, it is not enough to become enlightened oneself. We have to help each other make it. If (as Zarathushtra implies),<sup>27</sup> each of us is a fragment of existence, then no one makes it until everyone makes it.

Returning to Y51:22, other scholars think that "... those who have existed and (still) exist..." refer to human beings.<sup>28</sup> I agree with such other scholars ... in part. I think that "... those who have existed and (still) exist..." refers to the qualities of the Divine (amesha spenta) and to those living beings who have attained lordship over these qualities completely and who, with the Divine, form a plurality that is a unity.<sup>29</sup>

But whichever view you may prefer regarding the identity of "... those who have existed and (still) exist...", there is no dispute about one fact, and that is that the worship of the Divine described in Yasna 51:22 is based on a foundation of love, "Them (all) shall I worship with their own names and I shall serve them with love." Y51:22, Insler 1975.

#### *Love and salvation:*

Zarathushtra's idea of salvation is a state of being which is achieved when we have attained completely, the attributes of the Divine.<sup>30</sup> Now if such attributes include 'love' then it follows (as the day the night) that 'love' is included in his notion of salvation. And this is corroborated by the fact that in many of the verses in which Zarathushtra mentions salvation, he links it with beneficence and love. For example:

In his view, we achieve salvation (as he defines salvation) by making the right choices. And how does he describe a person who makes the right choices? He does not describe him as 'just', or even as 'righteous'. He describes him as "beneficent". Referring to choices between the two ways of being ~ the more good and the bad ways of being ~ he says, "... And between these two, the beneficent have correctly chosen ..." Y30:3, Insler 1975. And in Y34:3, Zarathushtra links beneficence directly to the attainment of salvation "...let salvation be granted to the beneficent man ... Wise One!" Y34:3, Insler 1975.

In other words, each choice we make that is in accord with the true order of existence (*aša-* ~ a generous, loving, beneficial order)<sup>31</sup> is a step forward on the path of spiritual growth or progress. But of all the good qualities that are included in the notion of the true order of existence (*aša-*), the one that Zarathushtra singles out as personifying the correct choice (Y30:3 above), the one that achieves salvation (Y34:3 above), is beneficence ~ a good, generous, bountiful, lovingkindness.

I rather like the idea that on the path of spiritual growth, a good first step may be justice (being fair), but that an even higher step is generosity ~ a generous, bountiful, lovingkindness.

In Y44:2, referring to the most-good existence (*ahu- vahišta-*) which is one of his names for paradise (as it is in YAv. texts as well), he asks Wisdom if "the loving man" will be saved, describing such a person as a world-healer and Wisdom's ally in spirit. He says,

"...Is the beginning of the best existence [*ahu- vahišta-* 'the most good existence'] in such a way that the loving man who shall seek after these things is to be saved? For such a person, [*spənta-* 'beneficial'] through truth [*aša-*], watching over the heritage for all, is a world-healer and Thy ally in [*mainyu-* 'his way of being' ], Wise One." Y44:2, Insler 1975.

And how does Zarathushtra define salvation? As the true (correct) good order of existence and its comprehension good thinking, "... let that salvation of yours be granted to us: truth [*aša-*] allied with good thinking!..." Y51:20, Insler 1975. And we know that good thinking is the comprehension of the true order of existence (*aša-*) which includes lovingkindness, (loving care, loving concern, compassion, help, friendship et cetera).<sup>32</sup>

#### *Love and the relationship between humans and all the living.*

Zarathushtra calls his path to the Divine "...the path of truth (*aša-*)..." Y51:13; "... the stride of truth." Y51:17,<sup>33</sup> Insler 1975, i.e. the path of the true order of existence refracted into its component parts (the amesha spenta). But it is impossible to think, speak, and act, in a vacuum. Each beneficial thought, word, and action that embodies truth (*spənta- ārmaiti-*), creates in that instance something of the divine (amesha spenta) in our existence and is a stride on "...the path of truth [*aša-*]...", ~ for ourselves, and for all those

who are affected by such thoughts, words and actions ~ other human beings, other life forms, our environment.

This [path of truth \(aṣa-\)](#) includes mutual loving help, all the good values which are a part of the true order of existence, and therefore affect our relationships with each other, with other life forms, with our environment.

Of course, this raises the question: How do we oppose wrongful qualities when confronted by thoughts words and actions that are not in accord with the true order of existence ~ qualities such as falseness, lies, ignorance, oppression, fury, violence, cruelty, harming, injuring, et cetera? This question does not have a one-dimensional answer. Let us take it in steps.

Zarathushtra teaches that each person has the right, (and the responsibility), to make his own choices and learn from them.<sup>34</sup> This teaching requires tolerance for choices with which we do not agree. At a basic level, it means that we cannot persecute people who do not agree with us, or force them to think, speak and act in the way we think is good for them.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, such tolerance, is a characteristic of the Divine ("[...Him who left to our will to choose between the \[spāncā 'beneficial'\] and the \[aspāncā 'non-beneficial'\]...](#)" Y45:9, Insler 1975. And in a much later prayer, He is called "the all knowing tolerator",<sup>36</sup> (or 'the all-knowing Tolerant-One').

Going beyond tolerance, when we treat each other with all the good qualities implicit in the true order of existence ([aṣa-](#)), it often (but not always) generates a corresponding goodness from the recipient, which helps to heal our world (in 1,001 small ways).

Let us take it a step further. How do we handle a situation when confronted with wrongful words and actions? Essentially, Zarathushtra teaches that we should think our way through to a solution. Will we make mistakes? Of course we will. But mistakes are a good way to learn. We have to use our own good thinking to help us make the choices that seem 'right' to us in each situation on a case by case basis. In Y49.1, after complaining of persecution and slander he asks for a solution "[...through good thinking...](#)". He says,

"Yes, throughout my lifetime, I have been condemned as the greatest defiler, I who try to satisfy the poorly protected (creatures) with truth, Wise One [[mazdā-](#)]. Come to me, give support to me. Through good thinking, find a means of destruction of this." Y49:1, Insler 1975. In this verse, how does Wisdom [[mazdā-](#)] 'come to us'? With support. What is His means of destroying persecution and slander? Good thinking.

Wisdom's teaching is that we fight what is wrong with what is right, ~ the objective is to "[... deliver deceit into the hands of truth.](#)" Y30:8, Y44:14, Insler 1975. If we fight hatred with hatred, we only create more hatred. If we fight injustice with injustice, we only create more injustice. If we fight prejudice with prejudice, we only create more prejudice. It is better to find ways to solve wrongs with what is right, thereby promoting the true (correct, good) order of existence.

But it is undeniable that sometimes, 'goodness' and even the most good thinking of which we are capable, may not be enough to "[... deliver deceit into the hands of truth.](#)" Y30:8. What then? Well, I can only surmise that in such situations, a beneficial way of being ([spānta- mainyu-](#)) ~ one that accords with the true order of existence ([aṣa-](#)) ~ requires that we not pollute our minds with anger, hatred, and revenge. We just have to do whatever is necessary to protect ourselves and others from the destructive actions of such people, bless them in our minds, and leave them in the hands of the Divine, knowing that the true order of existence

(including its law of consequences, and mutual loving help) will eventually change their minds and preferences (although it may take a long time).

Which brings us to the question of violence and non-violence. When our best efforts are insufficient to peacefully overcome violence and harm, how do we protect ourselves and others in Zarathushtra's thought? How do we advance the 'good' in such situations? Is the use of force ever justified to protect against greater harm? What does Zarathushtra think of bearing arms? By nations? By individuals? Does he advocate non-violence in all instances?

He does not specifically answer these questions, and I agree that reasonable minds may differ as to what Zarathushtra's thinking may have been on the issue of non-violence. In Y31.18, his reference to Wisdom's 'weapon' does not (in my view) refer to physical weapons.<sup>37</sup> But there is no dispute that he lived in a society of warriors and herdsmen ~ the former were necessary for the survival of the latter. And in the context of his teachings (which must have worked well for his society, in light of how widespread they became), I am inclined to think that material weapons are tools, like any other material tools. They are neither intrinsically 'good' nor intrinsically 'evil'. It is how we use them that counts. To give a (somewhat trite) example, a knife in the hands of a surgeon is used in a beneficial way. In the hands of a murderer it is used to harm. The knife itself is neither 'good' nor 'bad'. I realize this argument has been misused by tyrants to justify oppressing people to perpetuate their power. And it also has been misused by individuals and groups who want no restrictions on the possession and use of firearms. But the fact that an idea is misused to justify what is wrong, does not make the idea itself wrong.

One of the benefits of Zarathushtra's teaching is that it does not give us fact-specific answers, and the question of non-violence is no exception. Let us recall, that his system requires us to address the challenges that confront us on a case by case basis with good thinking. Clearly, violence in most situations is not an intelligent (let alone beneficent) way to solve a problem. But is it 'wrong' in all instances?

Essentially, each person has to make that decision in a given instance for himself ~ using his own good thinking to the best of his abilities. I have great respect (and affection) for those luminous souls who opt for non-violence in all circumstances. They may believe that to pollute ourselves with violence would be the greater harm.<sup>38</sup> I could understand that argument if the harm were directed only to the person exercising non-violence. But is non-violence a generous, loving, beneficent, option when the harm threatens others? Is it 'right' to offer a generous lovingkindness (in the form of non-violence) to a wrongdoer, in preference to offering a generous lovingkindness (in the form of protection from injury or death) to a person threatened with harm?

I respect the right of others to opt for non-violence in all circumstances, but my own (hopefully 'good') thinking is that it would be 'right' to use appropriate force, but only as a last resort ~ when non-violence is not a viable option ~ to prevent even greater harm ~ possibly to me, definitely to one or many others, families, friends, communities, nations. A reasonable argument could be made that in such a situation, our non-violence could be a contributing factor in allowing the greater harm to come to fruition, making us (unintended, but actual) accessories to the violence being perpetrated by another.

Non-violence was used successfully by Mahatma Gandhi in India to secure Indian Independence, and by Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States in the 1950s, to stop institutionalized, legalized, segregation. Unfortunately, non-violence only works when you have a (more or less) decent adversary. An adversary who finds it repugnant to attack and kill unarmed people who are



acting in a non-violent way to achieve basic human rights, or at least an adversary who is embarrassed when its ruthless actions are publicized.

Would non-violence have worked against Stalin? Against Hitler? Against ISIS? National examples tend to get caught up in the conflicting loyalties of politics and patriotism. So let me offer a personal example ~ after all, the greater good is not always established on the level of nations, it is also made up of 1,001 small words and actions that advance the good, true (correct, good) order of existence in day to day life.

Would I commit violence to prevent someone from harming my children? my grandchildren? a friend? A stranger? I would.

And if the choices we make are 'wrong' in any given situation, we need not fear damnation and the tortures of 'hell'. The only 'fire' in Zarathushtra's thought, is the fire of enlightenment, the fire of the true order of existence (*aša-*) which, through the refiner's fire of the law of consequences and mutual loving help, will doubtless enlighten us and change our minds and preferences (over time).<sup>39</sup> At least, that is what I see in Zarathushtra's thought.

To summarize the role of love in our relationships with each other and other life forms, our path is the '[path of truth](#)' (which we have to search for, on-going). Our choices in thought, word, and action, need to embody the true order of existence ~ a central quality of which is a good, generous, lovingkindness to all that exists ~ to the Divine, to ourselves, to each other, to other life forms, to our environment.

*Conclusion:*

We have seen, through Zarathushtra's own words, that love is a quality of the true order of existence, the nature of the Divine, and how the Divine relates to mankind and all existence. Love is an ingredient in prayer, in how we worship, in making the right choices, in how we relate to each other, to other life forms, to all that exists. Love is an ingredient in earning salvation (from untruth). And love is the nature of paradise ~ the most good existence (*ahu- vahišta-*), which is the true order of existence (*aša- vahišta-*), which is the nature of the Divine.

So love is a fundament of Zarathushtra's thought.

This conclusion is corroborated (although only man is mentioned) in a later Pahlavi text, the sixth book of the Dinkard, written more than 1,000 years after Zarathushtra, which is said to be a collection of the sayings of ancient Zoroastrian sages. This text repeatedly shows the central role that love plays ~ in the nature of the Divine, and the nature to which man should aspire.

"114. ... The law of Ohrmazd is love of men;"

"E45e ... 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."

"E45h ... The law of Ohrmazd is love of people."<sup>40</sup>

"Ohrmazd" is the Pahlavi word which evolved from the Av. *ahura- mazdā-*.

The conclusion that love is a central feature of Zarathushtra's thought is also found in the Zoroastrian Wedding Ceremony, written in Pazand (an older form of the Persian language). In the *Ashirwad* part of this ceremony, the priest advises the bride and groom:



"...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." Translation by Shahin Bekhradnia (used here with her generous permission).

Unfortunately, by the time that Wedding Ceremony was written, Zarathushtra's own beautiful words of advice to brides and grooms on the occasion of his daughter's wedding, had long since become unknown to our priests. In the last Gatha, Zarathushtra tells his daughter and the other brides and grooms who were then getting married "... Let each of you try to win the other with truth [*aṣa-*] for this shall be of good gain for each ..." Y53:5, (Insler 1975) expressing the idea that each spouse should make the same effort to win the love and respect of the other with all of the values that comprise the true order of existence (*aṣa-*) ~ honesty, generosity, friendship, lovingkindness, compassion, justice (as in being fair), et cetera. In such a relationship, both parties would surely be winners.

In conclusion, lovingkindness, in its various manifestations, permeates each aspect of Zarathushtra's teachings, the way sunlight fills a garden, giving life and beauty to whatever it touches, making everything worthwhile. And so it is when we bring these teachings to life with our thoughts, words and actions. For as Zarathushtra reminds us,

It is the beneficent person who makes the right choices "... the beneficent have correctly chosen..." Y30:3, Insler 1975.

It is the loving man who is a world healer, and Wisdom's ally in his way of being, "... the loving man ... for such a person, [*spənta-*] through truth, watching over the heritage for all, is a world-healer, and Thy ally in [*mainyu-* 'in (his) way of being'], Wise One [*mazdā-* 'Wisdom']." Y44:2, Insler 1975.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*, for the evidence on which this conclusion is based.

<sup>2</sup> See in *Part One: Truth, Asha; and The Nature of the Divine*.

<sup>3</sup> Webster's International Dictionary, 2d Edition, (1956).

<sup>4</sup> Humbach 1991 Vol. 2, p. 224, translates *mərəzdikā* as 'compassion', as do Humbach/Faiss (2010). Taraporewala 1951 comments that his mentor, Bartholomae, translates the word *mərəzdikā* as 'pardon' following the Pahlavi translators (as does Moulton), but Taraporewala states that Bartholomae also gives the rendering 'compassion', 'grace' or 'kindness', which Taraporewala thinks better suits the context (p. 775), an opinion with which I agree.

<sup>5</sup> In Zarathushtra's teachings there is no notion of damnation in a hell of tortures for wrongful conduct. Therefore there is no notion of 'mercy' as a reprieve from damnation, or the consequences of wrongful conduct. This idea has been explained in a footnote in *Part One: Truth, Asha*, and also in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*; and in *Part Three: The Absence of Damnation & Hell in Other Avestan Texts*. The notion of a punitive hell (of temporary duration) is found only in some late Pahlavi and Pazand texts, detailed in *Part Three: Heaven & Hell in Pahlavi Texts*.

<sup>6</sup> See *Part One: Worship and Prayer* and *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship* for more evidence on how Wisdom supports, protects, helps.

<sup>7</sup> Evidence regarding mutual loving help is discussed in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*, and also in many other chapters. For the refiner's fire, see *Part Two: Molten, Glowing, Metal*.

<sup>8</sup> Zarathushtra asks the Divine to communicate with us, or instruct us, through good thinking, '[... May the Giver of reason/understanding instruct through good thinking \(the course of\) my direction \(so as\) to be \(the\) charioteer of \(my\) tongue.](#)' Y50:6, my translation. For other translations, see *Part Six: Yasna 50:6*.

<sup>9</sup> Dastur Dhalla gives a summary of the meanings attributed to 'fravashi' (Pahl. faravahar, farohar). He discusses the concept of the 'fravashi' as the divine within in Zoroastrian texts and also touches on similar beliefs in other cultures and religious traditions. See Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 232 - 243 (Av. fravashis), and pp. 375 - 378 (Pahl. farohars).

<sup>10</sup> Examples of the frequently used Avestan expression 'innate wisdom', and 'wisdom acquired by the ear', in later texts, and its genesis in the Gathas, are discussed in *Part One: Meditation and Contemplation*.

<sup>11</sup> Zarathushtra's use of 'rule' is discussed in *Part One: Good Rule, Vohu Xshathra, and Power*; and his use of 'Lord' and 'Ruler', are discussed in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*.

<sup>12</sup> There is a difference of opinion regarding the translation of Y45:11. In that verse, the word "[father](#)" appears. According to the translations of Azergoshasb, Insler, Jafarey, Mills, Moulton, Taraporewala and Humbach/Faiss (among others), the term "[father](#)" in this verse refers to the good man who opposes evil. According to the translations of Bode & Nanavutty, Haug, and T.R. Sethna, the word "[father](#)" in this verse refers to Wisdom Himself. In the Insler 1975 translation, a person who opposes evil, through his beneficial envisionment (*spənta- daēnā-*) "[... is an ally, a brother or a father ...](#)" of Wisdom, which Insler explains in a footnote as follows: "That is, any man in this world who acts under the motivation of his own virtuous spirit [*spənta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] is himself of the very nature of god." (p. 79, ft. 16).

<sup>13</sup> See *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*.

<sup>14</sup> For the meaning of 'your kind' based on the ways in which Zarathushtra uses this and similar terms in the Gathas see *Part Three: The Puzzle of the Sincere Ones and Others*.

<sup>15</sup> Insler, Bartholomae, Humbach and T.R. Sethna translate the stem *frya-* as 'friend', Taraporewala as 'beloved' or 'lover'. He comments that *frya-* words derive from the Sanskrit *priyá* which he states is used in the Bhagavad Gita to mean more than 'friend'. Tarap. pp. 449, 450, 575, 578.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the 'cow' as an allegory for the beneficial-sacred [*spənta-*] in mortal existence (i.e. an existence governed by divine attributes, amesha spenta) see *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Cow and its Network*.

<sup>17</sup> See in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Cow and its Network*, and *The Solution of Yasna 29*.

<sup>18</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution*; and *Part One: A Friendly Universe*.

<sup>19</sup> Discussed in *Part Two: The Solution of Yasna 29*.

<sup>20</sup> Discussed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta, The Puzzle of the Singular and the Plural* and *A Question of Immanence*.

<sup>21</sup> To have a true appreciation of what Zarathushtra means in Y51:22, when he uses *vahišta-* 'most good' (the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness *vohu-* 'good'), we need to keep in mind the multi-dimensional ways in which he uses *vahišta-* throughout the Gathas. He does so to describe,

- ~ the true order of existence (*aša- vahišta-*),
- ~ the Divine (which personifies this order of existence),
- ~ the attributes of the Divine (which are components of this order of existence),

~ the path to the Divine (which is this true order of existence *aša-*) and

~ the reward for taking that path (which is a personification of this order of existence *aša-*), ~ the state of being that is paradise. Av. *vahišta*, evolved into Pazand *vahesht*, which evolved into Persian *behesht* ~ each meaning 'heaven' ~ although in later texts, *vahesht* and *behesht* came to be thought of as a place of mostly material rewards, (instead of an enlightened state of being). Try reading again Y51:22, while keeping in mind, all these uses of *vahišta*-, and see how it affects your understanding of it.

*Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta*, contains the evidence and a more detailed discussion of how Zarathushtra uses *vahišta*-.

<sup>22</sup> Insler 1975 p. 109, ft. 26, in which he expresses the opinion that the phrase in Y51:22 "... those who have existed and (still) exist [*yōi āṇharēcā hənticā*]..." refers to the attributes of the Divine, (amesha spenta). Insler's conclusion is corroborated in YAv. texts as detailed in *Part Six: Yasna 51:22*.

<sup>23</sup> Insler 1975, p. 109, ft. 27.

<sup>24</sup> See in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*, and *A Question of Reward and the Path*.

<sup>25</sup> Detailed in *Part Six: Yasna 51:22*.

<sup>26</sup> The meanings of the names *ahura*- and *mazdā*- are discussed in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*.

<sup>27</sup> See *Part One: Completeness, Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*.

<sup>28</sup> These opinions are set forth in the discussion and translations of this verse in *Part Six: Y51:22*.

<sup>29</sup> See *Part One: The Identity of the Divine*; and *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Singular and the Plural*; and *Part Six: Yasna 51:22*.

<sup>30</sup> See *Part One: A Question of Salvation*, and in *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*, and *The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta*, and *The Houses of Paradise and Hell*.

<sup>31</sup> See *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

<sup>32</sup> See *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

<sup>33</sup> "... the stride of truth." Y51:17; "... the path of truth..." Y51:13, Insler 1975; for the ways in which Zarathushtra uses these terms, and his path to the Divine see *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*.

<sup>34</sup> See *Part One: The Freedom to Choose*, and *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, tolerance has not always marked the history of Zoroastrianism. The stone inscriptions of Kirdir, a Sasanian high priest, do indeed show that people of other religions were persecuted by him, and in some instances forced to convert to (his version of) Zoroastrianism. Such practices were directly contrary to Zarathushtra's most basic teaching that we each have the freedom, and the responsibility, to make our own choices in thought, word and action, as a necessary ingredient for spiritual growth. See *Part One: The Freedom to Choose*, and *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>36</sup> From the *Doa Nam Setayeshne* prayer as translated by Sethna in his *Khordeh Avesta*, (1980 reprint), p. 63. Although the collection of Zoroastrian prayers are called the *Khordeh Avesta* only parts of some prayers are in Avestan.

<sup>37</sup> See *Part One: A Question of Weapons*.

<sup>38</sup> It could be argued that the ultimate act of generous, lovingkindness would be to 'pollute' our own souls (with violence), in order to protect others. In light of the fact that this would be an act of generous self-sacrifice, I do not think that in Zarathushtra's thought, such an act would be a spiritual pollution. But that is just my view. I could be wrong.

<sup>39</sup> See *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>40</sup> Translated by Shaul Shaked (1979), in *Wisdom of the Sassanian Sages*, pp. 47 and 215. In E45h the author's translation writes the word as "Ohrmaz" which is probably a typographical error, because in the transliterated Pahlavi text, the author shows the word as "ohrmazd".