

Welcome everyone. I hope you are all doing well. This is the 5th Session of the California Zoroastrian Center's Seminar, "Liberating Zarathushtra's Relevance." The title of this Session is:

### **The Freedom To Choose & The Inevitable Good End.<sup>1</sup>**

You well may question: If we have the freedom to choose, how can the good End be certain, inevitable? Well, this paradox is one of Zarathushtra's life affirming, beautiful teachings that has long been forgotten under the influence of other religious paradigms. So let us liberate it.

The freedom to choose is a hallmark of his teachings. For example, he says,

"... Him who left to our will (to choose between) the [*spencha* 'beneficial'] and the [*aspencha* 'non-beneficial']..." Gathas, Yasna 45, verse 9, Insler translation 1975.

"... Reflect with a clear mind - man by man for himself - upon the two choices of decision ..." Gathas, Yasna 30, verse 2, Insler translation 1975.

So if people are free to choose what is wrong, doesn't that mean, we can never be certain that good will prevail and evil will be defeated? Yet Zarathushtra says the exact opposite - that the good End - the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence (*asha-*) - 'truth' for short - eventually, and inevitably, will prevail.<sup>2</sup>

He says,

"However, it has been fated for this world, ... that the truth [*asha-*] is to be saved for its (good) preference, that deceit is to be destroyed for its (false) profession..." Gathas, Yasna 49, verse 3, Insler translation 1975 ("profession" is used here in the sense of what is professed).

As I discussed in the last Session, this idea of the certain good End is so foundational that we find it even in later Avestan and Pahlavi texts as *frasho.kereiti*, and *frashgard*, respectively.

So, how are we to understand this paradox - the freedom to choose, and the inevitable good End?

Let us first recall Zarathushtra's notions of 'good' and 'evil'. Throughout the Gathas, good and evil are described as the products of choices in thought, word and action.

'Good' is the product of choices that are in accord with an order of existence that is true, correct, (*asha-*) - factual truths, as well as the truths of mind/heart/spirit - all that is 'right', 'good' which in the Gathas includes such qualities as honesty, generosity, lovingkindness,

friendship, compassion, et cetera. In fact, Zarathushtra calls this order of existence the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness (*asha- vahishta-*).

And 'evil' is the product of choices that are incorrect ~ all that is factually false, as well as what is 'wrong'. In the Gathas, this includes such things as lies, deceit, anger, violence, murder, cruelty, bondage, tyranny, corruption, theft, ignorance, et cetera.

Now, if evil is the product of wrongful choices, then when we stop choosing evil, we deprive it of substance. It ceases to have reality in thoughts, words and actions.

Let us take it a step further. We become what we choose. So the more we choose truth (*asha-*) the more truth-filled (*ashavan-*) we become, until eventually we personify truth completely (*haurvatat-*) ~ the wholly good, beneficial, way of being (*spenta- mainyu*).

So wouldn't it be equally possible for a person to eventually become completely evil through his wrong choices? The answer (as I see it in the Gathas) is that, this is not possible. Let us consider Zarathushtra's reasoning, step by step.

According to him, the good and evil ways of being (*mainyu-*) are a part of our original nature. He says,

"Yes, there are two fundamental [*mainyu-* 'ways of being'], twins which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action they are two: the [*vahyo* 'more good'] and the bad. ..." Gathas, Yasna 30, verse 3, Insler translation 1975.

So, as long as evil remains a preference in anyone's way of being, and finds expression in that person's thoughts, words and actions, it cannot be defeated.

Therefore it is apparent, that evil cannot be defeated by a Divine decree that abolishes evil ~ because evil is a part of the nature of living beings. (If you are wondering how this squares with the notion of 'creation' in Zarathushtra's thought, it is discussed in a chapter on my website in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of Creation*).

Nor can evil be defeated by punishment. The fear of punishment may cause a person to hide his evil inclinations. But once that fear is removed, the inclination would again express itself in thought word and action. And evil would still be with us.

A way to defeat evil, therefore, would be to change the preference for evil in all the living. And this change, to be effective, real, would have to be something that is made from within, freely, without compulsion.

And that is Zarathushtra's solution for defeating evil. It is not punishment in a hell of tortures. It is changing minds, changing preferences. In his thought, this change is

accomplished through certain factors, all of which are a part of the true (correct, good) order of existence, and all of which occur concurrently.

**The first factor** is the freedom to make our own choices, because that is how we learn ~ even the failure to choose, is a choice.

**The second factor** is our many experiences. In Zarathushtra's thought, the acquisition of wisdom is experience based. These experiences include,

- ~ **earned** experiences (in which we experience the consequences of our choices);
- ~ **unearned** experiences; and
- ~ **mutual, loving help.**

**The earned experiences** are what I call the law of consequences (that we reap what we sow), which, in Zarathushtra's thought, is a part of the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence (*asha*).<sup>3</sup>

In fact, when describing the agent that delivers the law of consequences, he frequently uses fire. Now it is important to be aware, that fire is never used in any Avestan or Pahlavi text, (that I am aware of) as an agent of punishment. Even in the very **un**Zarathushtrian Pahlavi text we discussed in the last Session, that specializes in the punitive torments of hell, there is no mention of fire as an instrument of torment. In the Gathas and in later Avestan and Pahlavi texts, fire is a symbol or metaphor, for three perspectives of one thing ~ truth, its comprehension, its personification, an enlightened, or light-filled, state of being ~ which is wisdom/Wisdom. But the mind-sets of many translators and readers of the Gathas, conditioned by other religious paradigms, associate fire with the punitive fires of hell, which has distorted Zarathushtra's teachings. Here are a few examples of how Zarathushtra uses fire with the law of consequences. Addressing the Divine, he says,

"Now, we wish Thy fire, Lord, which possesses strength through truth [*asha*] and which is the swiftest, forceful thing, to be of clear help to Thy supporter but of visible harm, with the power in its hands, to Thy enemy, [*mazda* 'Wisdom']." Gathas, Yasna 34, verse 4, Insler translation 1975.

Here we know that fire is a metaphor, because physical fire is not made strong through truth. But, *understanding* is made strong through truth. And throughout the Gathas, the '**enemy**' of Wisdom (*mazda*) is not another person or tribe. The enemy of Wisdom is what is false, wrong, ignorant. So in this verse, Wisdom's **enemy** ~ all that is false, wrong, ignorant ~ is harmed by the powerful light of truth and its comprehension ~ expressed through the metaphor, fire. Another example: He says,

"...those rewards Thou shalt give, through the heat [*garema*] of Thy truth-strong fire, to the deceitful [*dregvaite*] and to the truthful [*ashaunaecha*],<sup>4</sup> ..." Gathas, Yasna 43, verse 4, Insler translation 1975.

Here 'fire' cannot be a punitive agent, because it delivers rewards not only to those who act deceitfully, but also to those who act truthfully. And here, the "heat" of Wisdom's "truth-strong fire" reflects one of Zarathushtra's metaphors for the soul refining process, which in 3 other verses he compares with metal ore being made molten, glowing, through the heat of fire, to eliminate the 'impurities' in the ore, and produce refined metal.

Summarizing in a rather general, over-simplified way, how the law of consequences works to change our wrongful preferences: When the good we do comes back to us, we realize that this is the way we want things to be ~ it reinforces our good preferences. When the wrongs we do come back to us, we don't like being on the receiving end of such experiences, we realize that this is not the way we *want* things to be, that this is not the way things *should* be.

These experiences inform our preferences, they enlarge our understanding, so that (incrementally) we come to want what is true, good, right, because that is the way we want things to be. This change does not occur overnight, or with one or two experiences. It occurs over a very long period of time, through multiple experiences, as a later Avestan text implies (I have footnoted quotations).<sup>5</sup> And we should not beat ourselves up when we make mistakes ~ as we all inevitably will. Mistakes are a good way to learn.

You may object, that being on the receiving end of evil does not necessarily change preferences. It often generates hatred, revenge, or a desire to identify with, and imitate, the abuser. That is true. Hold that thought for a moment. We will get to it.

Unfortunately, many linguists have translated certain Avestan words in the Gathas as 'punishment', 'retribution' et cetera. These translation choices are inconsistent with what Zarathushtra specifically says in the Gathas. But if we translate these Avestan words more literally, as 'adverse consequences' or similar English equivalents, without the added interpretation that these adverse consequences are given for 'punishment', instead of for enlightenment, then these verses ~ like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle ~ fall into place. Here are a few examples of how the law of consequences is administered and what it brings about. Zarathushtra says,

"...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohu~manah~*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Gathas, Yasna 43, verse 16, Insler translation 1975.

"...when the distribution **in the good** [*vanghau* locative sg.] shall occur **to both factions** through Thy **bright** fire, [*mazda* 'Wisdom'] ." Gathas, Yasna 31, verse 19, Insler translation 1975.

"That **satisfaction** [*xshnutem* acc. sg.] which Thou hast created **for both factions** together with Thy [*mainyu* 'way of being'] and hast promised through fire and truth [*asha*~] ..." Gathas, Yasna 31, verse 3, Insler translation 1975.<sup>6</sup>

"... together with this [*spenta*~ *mainyu*~ '**beneficial** way of being'], Thou shalt give the distribution **in the good** [*vanghau* loc. sg.] **to both factions** [*ranoibya*]<sup>7</sup> through Thy fire, ..." Gathas, Yasna 47, verse 6, Insler translation 1975.

In these verses the law of consequences is implemented by Wisdom through His **good thinking**, His **beneficial way of being**, and it delivers an end result that is **good**, and brings **satisfaction** to both those who do good and those who do wrong. The Avestan words for 'in the good' and 'satisfaction' are not plural, they are singular, so ~ one satisfaction, one good (end) for both types of conduct. And how does Zarathushtra describe Wisdom's fire? As **bright**, ~ a fire that illuminates ~ not an instrument of punishment.

Here is one more Gatha verse on this subject. This time, I give you my more literal translation, because (with respect) I find Insler's to be too interpretive.

'The **satisfaction** [*xshnutem* acc. sg.] which you, Wisdom, give for both types (of conduct) [*ranoibya*], through your **bright** fire, through molten metal, **(is) to be given for clarification** [*daxshtem*] among living beings, (is to be given for) **untruthfulness** [*dregvantem* sg.] **to be destroyed**'. (Thus) You **save truthfulness** [*ashavanem* sg.]!' Gathas, Yasna 51, verse 9, my translation.<sup>8</sup>

To summarize: In the Gathas, the law of consequences is not a punitive process. It is a process that enlightens ~ implemented by Wisdom through His **good thinking** (Y43:16), through His **beneficial way of being** (Y47:6), to help us increase our understanding, increase our compassion which, over time, eliminates, destroys, our wrongful preferences. In this way, the law of consequences eventually delivers the "good" (Y47:6, Y31:19), and "satisfaction" (Y31:3, Y51:9) to everyone ~ for both our 'good' and 'bad' choices.

A brief reminder: In the Gathas, the process of generating the law of consequences ~ that we reap what we sow ~ is reserved for the Divine alone. Our good thinking is not so perfected as to be an effective instrument for delivering the law of consequences so as to bring about enlightenment, rather than repeated cycles of abuse or a thirst for revenge, on the part of the

recipient. In the Gathas, the human soul is judged by Wisdom, and by the soul itself, ~ not by its fellow human beings, nor by any human religious authority.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, let us remember, that this evolutionary process is a *spiritual* process. We humans live in many different social units. If each person were free to translate his wrongful preferences into words and actions that harm others, ~ without restraint, without consequences, ~ we would have anarchy, chaos. No person's life or property would be safe. So the rule of law ~ a system of just laws, applicable to all, without prejudice or favor, that prevents people from continuing to harm others ~ is necessary for the protection of individuals, and our societies. This is in accord with Zarathushtra's teaching that we should actively oppose what is wrong, harmful. Let us now consider,

**Unearned experiences.** Not all the hardships and difficulties we experience are the consequences of our own past wrongful conduct. The wrongful choices of others often impact the innocent; so too do many factors beyond our control ~ illness, the death of loved ones, poverty, hardship, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, to give just a few examples. But if, (as Zarathushtra teaches), life is an evolution to enlightenment, (to wisdom/Wisdom), and acquiring wisdom is experience based, then it stands to reason that we would have to experience a huge variety of experiences ~ earned and unearned ~ to enlighten our thinking.

So now, when I experience difficulties, or crises, instead of getting angry at the unfairness or the senselessness of the situation, I ask for help. I ask for understanding (which is good thinking).

This I learned from Yasna 29 ~ a mini-drama which includes an allegory with which so many of us are uncomfortable,<sup>10</sup> ~ the "[soul of the cow](#)". Zarathushtra lived in a society that raised horses and cattle. And the cow was a hugely beneficial part of their lives ~ filling a great many of their needs, enabling them to survive, in a time period when there were no grocery stores. Zarathushtra had to pick a symbol or allegory that was relevant to the people of his time.

In my view, the [soul of the cow](#) is an allegory for the universal soul of the beneficial way of being ~ all that is good ~ in mortal existence. The cast of characters in Yasna 29 includes Wisdom and 3 of Its divine qualities which are shown here as entities ~ truth, good thinking, and a beneficial way of being.<sup>11</sup> Why does Zarathushtra show these qualities as entities? I think he does so to acknowledge and then reconcile (in dramatic form), the apparent conflict that an order of existence which is supposed to be wholly good, includes so much suffering. He starts this song with a cry of suffering, and a plea for help from the allegorical cow, to the Divine and Its 3 qualities,

"... the cruelty of fury and violence, of bondage and might, holds me in captivity. I have no pastor other than you. Therefore appear to me with good pasturage..." Gathas, Yasna 29, verse 1, Insler translation 1975.

Wisdom's beneficial way of being is troubled by such suffering, and asks truth, if this is a true, correct way for things to be.

"... they replied through truth [*asha*]: *There is no help free of enmity for the cow...*" Gathas, Yasna 29, verse 3, Insler translation 1975.

At that point, Wisdom (*mazda*),<sup>12</sup> ~ faced with an apparent impasse (between the beneficial way of being's objection to suffering, and truth's reply) ~ sets the stage for the solution, giving reassurance that there is indeed a beneficial design at work. But what is so interesting is: To whom does Wisdom turn for the solution? He turns to good thinking. He says,

"... Who has (been found) by thee, good thinking, who might give these things to ... mortals...?" Gathas, Yasna 29, verse 7, Insler translation 1975,<sup>13</sup> ("these things" refers to Wisdom's teachings ~ the path of truth, through which suffering is eliminated). And good thinking informs Wisdom that it has found Zarathushtra (i.e. a person who thinks).

The genesis of Wisdom's solution for the suffering that afflict existence, is good thinking ~ an understanding of what is true, good, right, which enables us to produce beneficial thoughts, words and actions which embody truth (*spenta- aramaiti*), and establish its good rule (*vohu- xshathra*), thereby helping to eliminate the many wrongs that cause suffering ~ lies, deceit, cruelty, corruption, predatory violence, etc.

But Zarathushtra takes us a step further. In Yasna 29 he teaches us that, it is not suffering alone that is contrary to the true (correct, good) order of existence. Such suffering enlarges our understanding, helps us to change our wrongful preferences, and enables spiritual growth. What is contrary to the true (good) order of existence, is suffering without help, without nurture.

Which brings us to the 3d kind of experiences, necessary for bringing about the certain good end/End, which is,

### **Mutual, loving help.**

Reaping what we sow, and unearned difficulties alone, are not enough to change minds, change preferences. All too often, when a person is on the receiving end of injustice and other wrongful conduct, it does indeed generate hatred, anger, violence, a desire for revenge. And those exposed to abusive behavior sometimes do indeed identify with, and repeat in their own lives, the abusive patterns to which they have been subjected. Clearly something

more is needed to change our preferences and break the cycles of revenge, hatred, abuse, despair. That 'something more' is the other good qualities that are a part of the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence (*asha- vahishta*). These qualities generate the mutual, loving help we need to make it through the refiner's fire.

None of us can make it on our own. To make it, each of us must both give and receive help with a generosity that does not look for an exact exchange ~ or any exchange at all.

Yasna 29 teaches us, that whether we are going through small difficulties, or an overwhelming dark night of the soul, there will always be help at hand. It may not take the form we expect, or want, but it will be there. And in the long run, such help will be better, ~ will help us more ~ than anything we could have asked for.

So where does all this help come from? Many sources, one of which is the Divine. Referring to his own suffering, Zarathushtra says,

"...Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend ..." Gathas, Yasna 46, verse 2, Insler translation 1975;

We are told that the Divine offers solicitude, (which means loving care, concern),

"...Him, the one who offers solicitude..." Gathas, Yasna 45, verse 7, Insler translation 1975;

"...the glories of Him who offers solicitude (to us), ..." Gathas, Yasna 46, verse 17, Insler translation 1975.

And we are told that He is the first to help, protect, when we experience the difficulties of the refiner's fire (Y30:7) ~ earned and unearned.

"... He shall be here for the protection of these ... [mortals], just as (He shall be) the first (to do so) during the repayments with (molten) iron.' Gathas, Yasna 30, verse 7, Insler translation 1975.<sup>14</sup>

And as we have seen in a past Session, Wisdom helps, supports, protects, with truth (*asha*) and its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu manah*). The loving angels that come to help us are His thoughts, the understanding He helps us to attain.

Other angels come to help as well ~ friends, neighbors, strangers ~ all part time angels.<sup>15</sup>

Each of us, all the living, are a part of this fellowship of part time angels ~ helping in a huge variety of ways, in the reality of our day to day lives ~ from something as small as a joke to cheer someone up, to more significant ways of helping. The compassionate, generous, loving, thoughtful, intelligent, help we give each other is as important, and as indispensable, as the law of consequences and unearned calamities, in changing our wrongful preferences, and



breaking repeated cycles of revenge and abuse. We grow by both giving and receiving help, and in the process we help to change existence. We make things 'more good' (the *vahyah-* of Y30, verse 3), 'more beneficial' (the *spanyah-* of Y45, verse 2) for ourselves, for each other, for other life forms, for the environment. We help to heal existence.

So once again we see that we are Wisdom's partners in bringing about the mutual, loving help, ~ the beneficial thoughts, words and actions ~ that heal existence. As Zarathushtra says, "...the loving man ... [*spenta-* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha-*], watching over the heritage for all, is a world-healer [*ahum.bish* '(an) existence-healer'] and Thy ally [*urvatho*] ... [*mazda-* 'Wisdom']." Gathas, Yasna 44, verse 2, Insler translation 1975.

In the last session, one of us ~ I think it was Mark? ~ asked: What is the third factor that holds everything together? I think it is mutual, loving help between the Divine, and man, and all the living that holds everything together.

But without the freedom to choose, and experience the consequences of our choices, our spiritual growth would have no beginning. It is the freedom to choose, that starts the process of bringing about the inevitable good End, thus reconciling the paradox with which we started this Session.

I would like to leave you with a question. Place it on the back burner of your mind, and let your mind play over it.

If, (as Zarathushtra teaches) we are capable of attaining all 7 qualities of the Divine completely, through an evolutionary process that requires making choices, how did Wisdom acquire these 7 qualities? Did Wisdom choose too? Was Wisdom a part of this evolutionary process? We will consider this in the next Session.

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<sup>1</sup> Details and references are provided in the following chapters on my website <https://gathasofzarathushtra.com>

*In Part One:*

*Truth, Asha;*

*The Nature of the Divine* (for evidence of mutual, loving help);

*The Freedom To Choose;*

*Good & Evil;*

*A Question Of Salvation;*

*A Friendly Universe;*

*Fire In All Things;*

*Reincarnation* (this chapter includes quotations from the only (few) ancient texts of which I am aware that imply reincarnation as a part of Zarathushtrian beliefs);

*The Paradox Of The Material & The Spiritual;*

*In Part Two:*

*Asha & The Checkmate Solution;*

*A Question Of Reward & The Path;*

*The Paradox Of Bad For The Bad;*

*The Solution of Yasna 29* (which shows that there will always be nurture (mutual, loving, help) to see us through suffering);

*Light, Glory, Fire;*

*Molten, Glowing, Metal;*

*In Part Three:*

*Adverse Consequences, Not Punishment;*

*Ashavan & Dregvant.* This chapter discusses with evidence, the fact that in Avestan, adjectives (like *ashavan* 'truth-possessing', and *dregvant* 'untruth-possessing') can also be used as nouns that have the qualities of such adjectives ~ nouns that are concepts ('truthfulness' and 'untruthfulness') as well as nouns that are people ('the truthful', and 'the untruthful'), and that many translators elect to translate these 2 adjectives as people (pl.) even in verses in which the forms of these adjectives are sg. ~ thereby (inaccurately) promoting the conclusion that Zarathushtra advocated the destruction of 'untruthful people' (pl.), instead of the destruction of 'untruthfulness' (sg.) - in each of us.

*In Part Six:*

*Yasna 51:9;*

*Yasna 30.7;*

These chapters in *Part Six* show why I think other translations of these verses are too interpretive, and after discussing the verse itself, I give the linguistic bases for my translations, that appear in the main part of this talk (Session 5).

<sup>2</sup> It is not without interest that in a YAv. text, the victory of good over evil does not seem to be limited to man. 'Bahram' is the Pahlavi word for the Avestan Verethraghna (the concept of the victory of good over evil). The titles of the Yashts are in Pahlavi, but the Yashts themselves are in YAv. Darmesteter in his introduction to the *Bahram Yasht* (Yt. 14), says that Bahram (Verethraghna) is the "Genius of Victory", and that §§ 1 - 28 are an "enumeration of the ten incarnations in which Verethraghna appeared to Zarathushtra" ~ as wind, as a bull, as a horse, as a camel, as a boar, as a youth, as a raven, as a ram, as a buck, and as a man. SBE 23, p. 231.

These enumerated creatures are the ones that were most commonly a part of the lives (and myths) of the people who lived in those (YAv.) times (except that including 'a youth' and 'a man' without also including 'a girl' and 'a woman' is unusual for an Avestan text, in so many of which men and women are routinely mentioned in tandem ~ even when describing enemies, detailed in *Part One: Gender Equality* in my website).

If we look past the allegory of Victory in these ten "incarnations" (as Darmesteter calls them ~ I call them "personifications" (of Victory)) what does this Yasht tell us?

It tells me (in part) that in YAv. times, the problems of good and evil, and that good will prevail ~ the Victory of good ~ were thought to apply to other life forms as well (not just to mankind) which is consistent with the idea of the immanence of the Divine in all things ~ also implied throughout certain YAv. and Pahlavi texts (see in *Part One: The Fire In All Things*; and in *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*; and *A Question of Immanence*).

In later times, the recital of the *Bahram Yasht* as a prayer acquired the reputation for bringing 'success' in times of difficulty. I think the reason for this may have been as follows:

Originally, the *Bahram Yasht* represented the 'success' ~ the 'victory' ~ of good over evil in all the living ~ an expansive, comprehensive 'success' or 'victory'. But in later times, the notion of 'success', 'victory' evolved to include other kinds of 'success' ~ success in business, success in an examination, success (a good outcome) in something that was worrying the person who was praying.

This does not mean we should denigrate (or abandon) such prayers. The prayers of imperfect mortals would, by definition, be imperfect. In the Gathas, a prayer needs only 2 ingredients ~ good purpose and love, "... I know that words deriving from good purpose and from love are not to be left wanting by you." Y28:10).

I think the Divine takes all our (imperfect) prayers, and turns them to good purpose. Which may be why we think such prayers are often "answered". Zarathushtra describes Wisdom as beneficial (*spenta-*), beneficent (*hudah-* literally 'good giving'). As used in the Gathas, these words mean a bountiful generosity, stemming from goodness, lovingkindness. Wouldn't a bountifully generous, loving, Divine give us freely (without any tit for tat exchange) what we ask for, if doing so would not harm us (in any way)? I think It would. I think It gives with bountiful generosity even when we don't ask. That is just my opinion. But it is based on what I see in the Gathas.

<sup>3</sup> We know that the law of consequences is part of the true (correct), wholly good order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*). Zarathushtra says, in the following verse,

"As in harmony with those things which are the laws of the foremost existence, ... (right) judgment [*ratush*] thus shall bring to realization the most just actions for the deceitful as well as for the truthful ..., and for the person for whom falsity and honesty are held to be indifferent." Gathas, Yasna 33, verse 1, Insler translation 1975. The first string of dots indicates that I have omitted the word "(final)" which Insler has added which is not in the Avestan text. The Gathas do not express the notion of any 'final' judgment ~ whether end of life or end of times. The word judgment [*ratush*] in this verse is a mental quality, a mental capability ~ as in *having good judgment*.

In this verse, the laws of the foremost existence are the laws of the true (correct, most good) order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*). Now in English, 'judgment' (a mental capability) can mean good judgment as well as bad judgment. And that is also true of a different Avestan word for 'judgment' as well. But the Avestan word *ratush* means judgment that is inherently correct, right, because *ratush* derives from the root *ar-* which is also the root for *asha-* (Vedic *rta-*, Old Persian *arta-*). So the law of consequences is administered, through 'correct, right, judgment' that is a part of the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence, (*asha- vahishta-*) ~ detailed in *Part Three: Ratu*.

<sup>4</sup> As quoted in the main part of this paper, Insler translates this phrase as follows, "...those rewards Thou shalt give, through the heat of Thy truth-strong fire, to the deceitful [*dregvaite* sg.] and to the truthful [*ashaunaecha* sg.], ..." Y43:4, Insler 1975. The words *dregvaite* literally 'deceitful' and *ashaunaecha* literally 'and truthful', are adjectives, which in Av. can be used as nouns (persons, concepts, activities etc.) that have the quality of the adjective. As you can see, Insler has translated these adjectives as plural nouns that are people. But the grammatical form of these adjectives is singular, not plural. I therefore think a more accurate translation of each of these adjectives, would be a sg. noun that is a concept/activity because throughout the Gathas, Zarathushtra's focus (for purposes of reward) is not on dividing people into two groups ~ the truthful and the untruthful ~ which does not accord with reality, nor with his teachings in that each of us is a mix of qualities that are more-good and bad (Y30.3), more-beneficial and harmful (Y45.2). His focus is on the conflict between two ways of being ~ two qualities of existence ~ within each person. I therefore think translating these 2 adjectives as qualities ~ *deceitfulness* and *truthfulness* are consistent with Zarathushtra's thought, whereas translating them as 2 groups of persons, (with respect) is not. For a more detailed discussion see *Part Three: Ashavan & Dregvant*.

<sup>5</sup> The long, long, time required for the transformation of preferences, in the soul-refining process ~ the renovation of the soul ~ is hinted at in the YAv. Yy62 (a Yasna addressed to fire), which (among other things) says the following ~ all of which establish that fire is used metaphorically. The (somewhat antiquated) translation is by Mills. It was done in around 1887 ~ at an earlier stage of the decoding of Avestan. He routinely translates *ashavan-* words as holy, and 'saints' instead of 'truthful'. I have omitted many of the words he has added (which he placed in round parentheses)

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which are not in the Avestan text. And where his translation is too interpretive, I have placed in square brackets, the Avestan words and my translation.

"[2] ... O Fire, ...

[3] Be now aflame [Mills' footnote: "Or, 'for giving light'."] within this house; ... be on thy growth within this house; for long time be thou thus to the furtherance of the heroic (renovation), to the completion of (all) progress, ... even till the good heroic ... time when that renovation shall have become complete." Yy62:2 - 3.

"Give me, O Fire, ... an expanded mind, and nimbleness of tongue for soul and understanding even an understanding continually growing in its largeness..." Y62:4.

"And may'st thou grant me, O Fire, [*vahisstem ahum ashaonam raochanghem vispo.xvathrem* 'the most good existence of the truth-possessing, light, all-happiness']. **And may I have experience** of the good reward, and the good renown, and **of the long forecasting preparation of the soul.**" Y62:6. SBE 31, pp. 314 - 315.

<sup>6</sup> In this verse Y31:3, Zarathushtra uses both 'fire' and 'truth' as the agent which delivers the end result of satisfaction, "That satisfaction which Thou hast created for both factions [or 'for both types (of conduct)] together with Thy [*mainyu-* 'way of being'] and hast promised through fire and truth ..." Y31.3. You well may ask: if fire is the material metaphor for truth (*asha-*), why does Zarathushtra use both fire and truth here? Perhaps it is because fire (a material metaphor) represents the soul refining process of the true order of existence (*asha-*) in mortal (material) existence, and truth the resulting (incremental) enlightenment.

<sup>7</sup> This part of Y47:6 has been variously translated as follows.

Insler "... together with this virtuous spirit [*spenta-mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'], Thou shalt give the distribution in the good [*vanghau*] to both factions [*ranoibya*] through Thy fire, ..." Y47:6;

My translation "... together with this beneficial way of being' [*spenta-mainyu-*], Thou shalt give the distribution in the good [*vanghau*] for both types (of conduct) [*ranoibya*] through Thy fire, ..." Y47:6.

Here, we have an important translation difference ~ rewarding factions, or rewarding conduct ~ which depends on how the word *ranoibya* is translated. Its stem *rana-* has not yet been decoded, and linguists translate *rana-* words in wildly different ways (discussed in a chapter on my website in *Part Six: Yasna 43:12*). So we need to choose a translation option that is consistent with the rest of the Gathas.

With respect, in Zarathushtra's thought, people are not divided (for purposes of reward) into 2 factions ~ one faction consisting of all-good people and the other faction consisting of all-bad people. In Zarathushtra's spiritual philosophy, it is types of conduct, that generate consequences/rewards, not types of people.

Based on the ways in which Zarathushtra uses *rana-* words in the Gathas, I think the stem *rana-* means 'type'. And in the above quoted Y47:6, I translate dative dual *ranoibya* as 'for both types (of conduct)', because it parallels the idea expressed earlier in Y43:16 in Insler's own translation, "...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohu- ... manah-*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Y43.16, Insler 1975.

<sup>8</sup> Other translations (including Insler's) are given for comparative purposes, in *Part Six: Yasna 51:9*.

<sup>9</sup> Evidence from the Gathas and later texts shows that the soul is judged by the Divine and by the soul itself, as detailed in a footnote in a chapter on my website, *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>10</sup> The beautiful teachings of Yasna 29, are detailed, step by step, in a chapter on my website in *Part Two: The Solution Of Yasna 29*.

<sup>11</sup> In this Yasna, the 3d quality of the Divine (in addition to truth and good thinking) included (allegorically) in the cast of characters is called 'the fashioner of the cow' (i.e. the fashioner of all that is beneficial in mortal existence, the allegorical cow). In other verses of the Gathas, the beneficial way of being (*spenta-mainyu*) is identified as the fashioner of the cow, and in yet other verses, Wisdom (*mazda*-) is identified as the fashioner of the cow (detailed in 2 chapters on my website in *Part Two: The Solution of Yasna 29; The Puzzle Of The Cow & Its Network*). So here we have a subtle circle of thought ~ the beneficial way of being (*spenta-mainyu* which is Wisdom's way of being) fashions the beneficial in mortal existence (the allegorical cow). If you are interested in how this squares with Zarathushtra's notion of 'creation', see *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation*.

<sup>12</sup> In this instance, Zarathushtra calls the Divine *mazda* 'Wisdom'; and also *ahura* 'Lord' which he uses in the sense of one who has obtained lordship over the qualities that make a being divine (as detailed in quotations in both Sessions 1 and 2 of this Seminar, 'Liberating Zarathushtra's Relevance').

<sup>13</sup> The full verse reads as follows: "The Wise Lord, who is of the same temperament with truth, fashioned that promise [*manthra*- 'precept'] of butter and milk for the cow. He is [*spenta*- 'beneficial'] to the needy in accord with His commandment [*sasna*- 'teaching']. (He said): 'Who has (been found) by thee, good thinking, who might give these things to the mortals below?' Y29:7, Insler 1975.

The words **butter and milk** are metaphors for nurture ~ the *manthra*- 'precept'] of **butter and milk** being the teachings of Wisdom ~ the path of truth ~ which nurtures, gives strength to, the beneficial mortal in existence (the allegorical cow).

Also, in this verse (Y29:7), 'below' is not a physical location. In the Gathas, 'uplift' is associated with good thinking, ("I who thoroughly bear in mind to uplift myself with good thinking,..." Y28:4; "... Thou knowest, Lord, (only) when there is uplifting of beings with the very best [*vahishta*- 'most good'] thinking,..." Y32:6, Insler 1975).

Allegories and metaphors are beautiful tools of poetry (and communication), but I have to admit that with the passage of millennia, especially after wars in which the learned were killed, the metaphors and allegories which Zarathushtra used, are not as readily apparent as they may have been in his time period, and have been the cause of much misunderstanding; and I begin to understand J. R. R. Tolkien's dislike for allegories (expressed in another context).

<sup>14</sup> Other translations are given for comparative purposes, in a chapter on my website, in *Part Six: Yasna:30:7* (which I am ashamed to say has some material typos, ~ for which my sincere apologies ~ but I hope to upload a corrected version soon).

<sup>15</sup> A mini puzzle in the Gathas, seems to suggest that perfected souls who are no longer bound by mortality, are free to come back to mortal existence to help us make it ~ not to do our thinking for us, not to dictate what we should believe, but to fill our needs, whether it is for nurture, guidance, a helping hand, whatever. A simple version of this mini puzzle is discussed in a chapter in my website in *Part One: The Angels Among Us*. A more detailed discussion appears towards the end of a chapter in *Part Three: Chinwat, The Bridge Of Discerning*.