

# The Incarnate Word: Translations and Commentaries

## *Yathā Ahū Vairyō (Ahuna Vairya, Ahunavar)*

*Yathā ahū vairyō athā ratush ashātchīt hachā,  
vanghēush dazdā mananghō shyaothananām  
anghēush mazdāi  
khshathremchā ahurāi. ā yim drigubyō dadat  
vāstārem.*

"Just as the Lord in accord with truth be chosen, so also the judgement in accord with truth. In consequence of (this) good thinking, institute ye the rule of actions stemming from an existence of good thinking for the (sake of the) Wise One, and for the Lord whom they established as pastor for the needy dependents."<sup>1</sup>

"He (Ahura Mazda) is as much the desired Master (*ahu-*) as the Judge (*ratu-*), according to *asha*. (He is) the doer of the acts of good intention (*vohu-manah-*), of life. To Mazda Ahura

1. Stanley Insler, *Monumentum H.S. Nyberg*, pp 419-420, Acta Iranica, 1975.

(is) the kingdom (*khshathra-*), whom they have established as pastor for the poor."<sup>2</sup>

"Just as the temporal Lord (*ahu*) within us is desirable in accordance with order (*asha*), so also is the spiritual Judge (*ratu*) cherished in accord with truth (*asha*).

In consequence of these, for the Wise Lord (Ahura Mazda), institute the good deeds of life, the kingdom (*khshathra*) and the gift of the good mind (*vohu manah*), be ye the pastor who established support for the one in need."

(Free translation)

Comments:

1. "The first line expresses the belief that only the truthful Lord (i.e. Ahura Mazda) and His way of truth must be chosen (over the other possibilities). The remainder of the prayer intones the consequence of this choice which itself arises from good thinking: that

2. Mary Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 1 pp 260-261.

*Limestone fire altars — Persepolis (c 6th century B.C.)*



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man must live by works of good thinking in His world, for good thinking is the basis of God's rule as well as that of His worldly prophet.....

In the prayer, we find mention that the real Lord as well as the real Judgement must befit the truth, and that both of these must be chosen. This is a step arising from each man's good thinking and as a consequence, it forces such a person of good insight to further the rule founded upon good thinking in his own world, since the true powers of heaven and earth depend upon this mental attitude. We also find in the beauty of these lines, the implication that Zarathushtra was the first to reach this realization and as a result of this, he was invested as the representative of God on earth. All the key terms and all the key ideas of the prophet's teachings thus appear in the *Ahuna Vairya*, and it is therefore understandable why this prayer maintained an autonomous existence of its own throughout time."<sup>3</sup>

2. The *Yathā Ahū Vairyō* forms the very foundation of the corpus of Zoroastrian prayers. It is believed that out of the Fire of astral form, arose this prayer, through whose spirit, the original creations came into existence (*GBd. I.50*). It is the only prayer which is attributed to have its own spirit, which when invoked is said to help man in every possible way. Every Zoroastrian child is taught this prayer, as it encompasses within it some of the fundamental principles of the religion.

Man, in this prayer, declares his desire for both the physical and spiritual Lords (*ahu*) and (*ratu*), who are to be recognized in accordance with the immutable Law of Nature – *asha* (truth). *Ahu* and *ratu* may be seen as the physical and spiritual counterparts of man which, when realized through introspection, are the existential realities of the Truth. It is upon

the foundation of truth that the (good) actions (*shyaothna*) in life are possible, though only when man apprehends the importance of the Kingdom of God as well as the gift of the good mind for the sake of the Lord of Wisdom Himself. A realization of these esoteric principles enables the "one who knows" to help those in need on a physical, psychological and spiritual level.

A repeated recitation of this prayer is indeed desirable, as it is said to give the person an inexplicable power which is strong enough to smite the "violators of truth" thereby keeping them at bay. In the *Bundahishn* it is stated therefore, that Ahura Mazda Himself recited this prayer to render the Evil Spirit unconscious and ineffective (*GBd. I.29 - 30*).

3. "*Ahunavar* is that spirit which propagates the religion which is formed from the *Ahunavar*."

"The *Yathā-ahū-veryō* is the origin of religion and therefrom is the formation of *Nasks*."

"i.e., 'Moreover, in the 3 lines of the *Ahunavar* which is the foundation of the reckoning of religion, there are 21 words. Just as the *Ahunavar* is the foundation of the reckoning of religion and its 3 lines are an emblem of the tripartite division of the reckoning of religion, so the 21 words of the 3 (lines) indicate the 21-fold sub-divisions of these 3 divisions, as it is declared that the Omniscient Creator created one discourse from one single word. It is evident that there were 1000 sections of these divisions, such as the *hās* and *fargards* which are in the *Nasks*, from the testimony and knowledge of the religion, owing to the teaching of Zarthosht of the revered *frōhār* in the country of Iran; and after the destruction which came on from the ill-fated villain Alexander created by Wrath, not so much as there had been (originally) was recovered as would be possible to regard it as the original writing.'" (*Per. Riv. p 2*).

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Insler, *Monumentum H.S. Nyberg*  
pp 420-421, *Acta Iranica*, 1975.

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**The Number of *Ahunavars* to be Recited on Undertaking Different Works<sup>4</sup>**

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No. of <i>Ahunavars</i>	Occasion
One	Before going to work or undertaking work of any kind, before asking for a loan, or going to see a wise man, or before returning home.
Two	Before pronouncing blessings upon anyone.
Six	Upon successfully accomplishing a mission, and at the time of celebrating a nuptial.
Nine	When seeds are sown or a tree is planted, when one is to cohabit with one's wife.
Eleven	When one goes seeking for a bride or bridegroom.
Twelve	When one undertakes mountain climbing, or when one walks on a bridge, or goes down into a cavern, or when one has lost one's way.
Twenty-one	When one embarks upon a long journey, so that Bahrām, the <i>Yazata</i> for victory, may protect the traveller.

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**The Number of *Ahunavars* to be Recited in Place of the Longer Avestan Prayers<sup>5</sup>**

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121	<i>YAVs</i> (plus 12 <i>Ashem Vohūs</i> )	—	For the <i>Patēt</i> prayer.
121	" ( " 12 " " )	—	For every <i>Āfrīnagān</i> .
103	" ( " 10 " " )	—	For <i>Ohrmazd Yasht</i> .
103	"	—	For <i>Sraosh Yasht</i> (recited) in the <i>Yasna</i> .
103	"	—	For <i>Khorshēd Nyāish</i> .
103	"	—	For <i>Mīhr Nyāish</i> .
100	"	—	For <i>Ardvisūr Nyāish</i> .
75	"	—	For <i>Sraosh Yasht Hādokht</i> .
65	"	—	For <i>Ardibehesht Yasht</i> .
65	"	—	For <i>Māh Nyāish</i> .
65	"	—	For every one of the five <i>gāhs</i> .

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4. *Per.Rivs.* pp 9 and 10.

5. *Per.Rivs.* p15.

"Every one who acts in accordance with this (and recites the) *Yathā Ahū Vairyō*, he will attain to the merit of them without doubt." (*Per.Riv.* p 15).

"O Zarathushtra! The recital of this word of truth (*asha*, in the *Ashem Vohū*) and the recital of the formula *Ahunavar*, increases strength and victory for one's soul and religion." (*Per.Rivs.* p 13, *Yt.* 21.4).

### *Ashem Vohū*

*Ashem vohū vahishtem astī,  
ushtā astī; ushtā ahmāi  
hyat Ashāi vahishtāi Ashem.*

"Truth (is) good, it is the best  
It is happiness, happiness (is) unto it the truth,  
In accordance for the best truth (itself)."<sup>6</sup>

"Righteousness is the best good.  
It is to be desired; we desire it!  
Righteousness belongs to the best  
righteousness."<sup>6a</sup>

"Lasting happiness comes to the person  
who recognizes and affirms the highest  
truth, for its own sake."

(Free translation)

Comment:

The *Ashem Vohū* is a short prayer in which the central theme is focused upon *asha*. Within the concept of *asha*, lies a three-tiered perspective. *Asha*, on a physical level, is best observed by the exacting order that exists in the universe; on a psychological level, *asha* is the powerful force of truth that every Zoroastrian is taught to recognize, whereas on a spiritual level, *asha* is the fusion of order and truth, leading man onto the path of righteousness. Order, truth and righteousness therefore are the three main qualities that underlie the concept of *asha*.

In the *Ashem Vohū*, man triumphantly de-

6. Transl. by the author.

6a. James Russell.

clares truth (*asha*) to be the best, as well as truth to be the key quality in the realization of ultimate happiness. This state of happiness can only be achieved when one consciously commits one's self to the principle of the best truth, for the sake of truth itself. In other words, everlasting happiness is the reward for a person who champions the cause of the best truth for its own sake, in order to aspire towards God-realization.

### *Airyema Ishyō*

*Ā airyema ishyō rafedhrāi jantū nerebyaschā  
nairibyaschā Zarathushtrahē;  
Vanghēush rafedhrāi mananghō yā daēnā  
vairim hanāt mizhdem  
Ashayā yāsā oshūm yām ishyām ahurō masatā  
Mazdāō. (Y.54.1)*

"May the desired Airyaman (Lord of Friendship) come to the aid of the men and women of Zarathushtra; to the aid also of the good mind, for which *daēnā* (religion/conscience) will grant noble reward. I ask for the abundance of *asha* (truth/order), which the most desirable Ahura Mazda (Lord of Wisdom) promised."

(Free translation)

Comment:

"Another great prayer in the *Gāthic* dialect, which also is wholly *Gāthic* in spirit, is the *Airyema Ishyō*, which is said to be the most triumphant of all prayers, for it will be spoken by the *saoshyants* at *Frashō.kērēti*."

In *Yasht* 3, Airyaman is referred to as the strongest *māthra* against sickness. In the *Gāthās*, the Avestan word *airyaman* occurs as a synonym for *hashi* (*Sk. sakhi*). Airyaman is invoked at Zoroastrian weddings and on occasions of friendship and hospitality. Airyaman and *Ātar* are said to melt the metal for the last great ordeal, to separate the guilty and the innocent at *Frashō.kērēti*; Airyaman is also associated with Mithra, the Lord of Covenant, who will assist in the "Making Wonderful".

7. Mary Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 1, p 261.

### **Yēnghē Hātām**

*“Yēnghē hātām āat yēsne paiti vanghō .  
Mazdāo Ahurō vaēthā Ashāt hachō  
Yaonghāmchā tāschā tāoschā yazamaidē.”*

“Then by reason of righteousness, we worship both the male and female aspects of these living beings in whom Ahura Mazda recognizes the best, in the act of prayer.”

(Free translation)

Comment:

The last of the great Zoroastrian prayers is the *Yēnghē Hātām*, which concludes the litanies of the *Yasna* in which long series of gods are enumerated and praised. It is often repeated during the recitation of the *Yashts*, which are hymns of praise dedicated to a pantheon of divinities.

### **Kēm nā Mazdā**

*Kēm nā Mazdā! mavaitē pāyūm dadāt,  
Hyat mā drēgvāo didareshatā aēnanghē.  
Anyēm Thwāmāt āthraschā Mananghaschā  
Yayāo shyaothnāish Ashem thraoshtā, Ahurā!  
Tām mōi dāstvām daēnayāi frōvaochā.  
Kē verethrem-jā Thwā pōi sēnghā yōi hentī  
Chithrā mōi dām ahūmbish ratūm chīzdī.  
At hōi vohū Sraoshō jantū mananghā  
Mazdā ahmāi yahmāi vashī kahmāichī.  
Pāta-nō tshiyantat pairi  
Mazdāoscha Ārmaitishcha Spentascha.  
Nasē daēvī druksh, nasē daēvōchithrē!  
Nasē daēvō-frakarshē, nasē daēvō fradāitē!  
Apa druksh nasē, apa druksh dvāra apa  
druksh vīnasē!  
Apākhēdhrē, apa-nasyēhē!  
Mā mērēnchainīsh gaēthāō astavaitish ashahē.  
Nemaschā yā Ārmaitish Izāchā.  
Ashem Vohū (1)*

“Whom hast Thou appointed as guardian for me, O Wise Lord, if the deceitful one shall dare harm me? Whom other than Thy fire and Thy mind through whose actions one has nourished the truth, O Lord? Proclaim that wondrous state to me for the sake of the conception (religion). Who shall smash the obstacle (of

deceit) in order to protect in accord with Thy teachings those pure ones who exist in my house? As (a) world healer, promise us a judge, and let obedience to him come through the good mind (and) to him whomsoever Thou dost wish him to be, O Wise One.<sup>8</sup> Defend us from the foe, O Wise One and O Bounteous Devotion. Begone demonic falsehood, begone the offsprings of the demons, begone the doings and miscreations of the demons, begone O liars; I drive them away northwards (in order) that they may not do the corporeal world of righteousness any harm. Homage (unto) Ārmaiti who (is) prosperous.”

(Free translation)

Comment:

This prayer is made up of two verses from the *Gāthās*, followed by a short extract from the Younger Avesta. In this prayer a Zoroastrian asks for God's protection, as well as he abjures and strongly repudiates the nature of evil. Significantly therefore, the *kūstī* is untied upon the recitation of this prayer, as a Zoroastrian without the sacred girdle is like a man without an armour. The *Kēm nā Mazdā* thus, is deemed to act as a temporary protection against the forces of evil, during the period in which the *kūstī* remains untied.

### **Hormazd Khōdāē (Kūstī Bastan)**

*Hormazd Khōdāē,  
Ahriman, awādashān dūr awāzdāshāt;  
zad shekashtēh bād!  
Ahriman, devān, drujān, jādūān, darvandān,  
kīkān, karafān, sāsārān gūnehgārān,  
āshmōgān.  
darvandān dushmanā frīān zad shekashtēh  
bād!  
Dūsh-pādshāhān awādashān bād!  
Dūshmanā stōh bād!  
Dūshmanā awādashān bād!  
Hormazd Khōdāē!  
Az hamā gunāh patēt pashēmānūm,  
az harvastīn dushmat, duzūkht, duzvarshī,*

8. Y.46.7, 44.16 as tr. by S. Insler in *The Gāthās of Zarathushtra*.

8a. Commonly referred to as the “*Ahuramazda Khōdāē*” prayer by the Parsis.

*mem pa gētī manīd, ōēm gōft, ōēm kard,  
 ōēm jast, ōēm būn būd ēstēd.  
 Az ān gunāh, manashnī, gavashnī, kunashnī,  
 tanī ravānī, gētī mīnōānī,  
 Okhē awāksh pashēmān  
 Pa sē gavashnī pa patē! hōm.  
 Khshnaothra Ahurahē Mazdāō!  
 Tarōiditē Anghrahē Mainyēush!  
 Haithyā varshām hyat vasnā fershōtemem.  
 Staomi Ashem. Ashem Vohū (1).*

"O Lord Ohrmazd! May Ahriman be suppressed, removed afar, stricken and crushed. May Ahriman, the demons, liars, sorcerers, wicked ones, evil rulers and priests, tyrants, sinners and heretics (be crushed). May the wicked ones, enemies, witches be stricken and crushed. May the evil rulers be without sovereignty. May the enemies be stupefied. May the enemies be without sovereignty.

O Lord Ohrmazd! I repent for all my sins (and for all evil thought, word and deed which has been thought, spoken and done by me in the world, (and which) has happened (and which) has proceeded from me; for these sins of thought, word and deed, of body and of soul, and of the corporeal and spiritual worlds, truly do I repent for myself with (these) three words. Propitiation unto Ahura Mazdā and scorn unto the Hostile Spirit. (May) the will of the truth-doers (be) foremost. I praise the Truth." (Free translation)

Comment:

The *Kūstī Bastan* is one of the prayers of the *kūstī* ritual, and is recited when a Zoroastrian reties the *kūstī*. Once again, in the presence of God, a promise is made by the individual to reject all forms of evil. A forgiveness is asked for, in order to expiate all the sins of thought, word and deed, that may have been committed by the person. The prayer ends with a solemn declaration on the part of a righteous Zoroastrian, to champion the cause of truth, in order to further and promote the world of Ohrmazd.

### *Jasa mē avanghē Mazda! (Fravarānē)*

*Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!  
 Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!*

*Jasa mē avanghē Mazda!  
 Mazdayasnō ahmī, Mazdayasnō  
 Zarathushtrish.  
 Fravarānē āstūtaschā fravaretaschā.  
 Āstuyē humatem manō, āstuyē hūkhtem  
 vachō,  
 Āstuyē hvarshtem shyaothnem.  
 Āstuyē Daēnām Vanghuhīm Māzdayasnīm.  
 Fraspāyaokhedhrām nidhāšnaitushem,  
 khaēt vadathām ashaonīm.  
 Yā hāitīnāmchā bushyēintīnāmchā  
 mazishtāchā, vahishtāchā, srāeshtāchā  
 Yā Āhūirish Zarathushtrish.  
 Ahurāi Mazdāi vīspā vohū chinahmī.  
 Aeshā astī Daēnayāō Māzdayasnōish āstūtīsh.  
 (Y.12.8-9).*

*Ashem Vohū (1).*

"Come to my aid, O Mazdā! Come to my aid, O Mazdā! I am a worshipper of Mazdā — I am a Zoroastrian worshipper of Mazdā — I agree to praise the Zoroastrian religion and to believe in that religion. I praise good thoughts, I praise good words, I praise good deeds, I praise the good Mazdā worshipping religion, which curtails disputes and quarrels, and which brings about next-of-kin marriages that are righteous; and which of all the religions that have flourished and are likely to flourish, is the greatest, the best, the most excellent, and which is the religion given by Ahura Mazdā to Zarathushtra. To Ahura Mazdā, I ascribe all good. This is the profession of the Mazdā worshipping religion."

(Free translation)

Comment:

The prayer may be likened to an oath of acceptance and allegiance, which a Zoroastrian proffers whilst making this declaration. Every time the *Fravarānē* is recited, a commitment is made by the adherent to uphold the teachings of Zarathushtra. Zoroastrianism, to a committed follower of the faith, should be all-encompassing and complete; therefore, to abandon the religion and seek spiritual sustenance elsewhere is clearly an act of apostasy.

When the sacred words of the *Fravarānē* are recited, the spirit of Zarathushtra is invoked, thereby allowing his message to be experienced and relived existentially.

### ***Din-nō Kalmō (Confession of the Faith)***

*Ba nām-ē Yazad, bakhshāyandēh  
bakhshāyashgarē meherbān.  
Razishtayāo chistayāo, Mazda-dhātayāo  
ashaonyāo,  
Daēnayāo Vanghuyāo Māzdayasnōish.  
Dīn bēh rāst va dōrōst, ke khodāē bar khalk  
ferastādēh in hast,  
kē Zartōsht avōrdēh hast;  
Dīn Dīnē Zartōsht, Dīnē Ahuramazd, dādēh  
Zartōsht Spitamān.  
Ashaonē Ashem Vohū (1).*

“In the name of the Lord (who is) benevolent, the giver of blessings, and the bestower of kindness. (Praise be) unto the most truthful, the wisest, Mazda-created, good, righteous religion of Mazda worshippers. The good, proper and true religion which God has sent to this world, is that which Zarathushtra has brought. That religion is the religion of Zarathushtra, (and) the religion of Ahura Mazda, communicated to the righteous Spitama Zarathushtra.”

(Free translation)

Comment:

This short prayer is regarded as being a confession of the faith. In this prayer, a categorical declaration is made in support of the religion—a religion which, to every Zoroastrian, should be the best and the most proper to follow. Upon committing one's self to this ideal, a true Zoroastrian must strive to live by the tenets of the religion fully, in every thought, word and deed.

### ***Dōa Tan-Dōrōstī***

*Ba nām-ē Yazad bakhshāyandēh  
bakhshāyashgar meherbān.  
Yathā Ahū Vairyō (2).*

9. To be recited thrice.

*Tan-dōrōstī dēr-zivashnī āwāyad; khorēh  
anghad ashahīdār; yazdānē mīnōān, yazdānē  
getlān, haft Ameshāspandān myazd rōshan  
hamē be-rasād! In dōyā bād, in khōahā bād!  
hamē andar kasārū Zarathushtrī Dīn shād bād!  
Aēdūn bād! yā bārī Khodā! Khodāvandē  
ālamrā, hamē Anjuman-rā (name here, the  
person or persons for whose well-being you  
wish to pray) rā bā farzandān, hazār sāi dēr  
bēdār, shād bēdār, tan-dōrōstī bēdār, aēdūn  
bēdār! Bar sarē arzāniyā, sālkhāē bisyār va  
karanhāē bishumār, bākī va pāyandēh dār;  
hazārān hazār āfrīn bād, sāl khojasteh bād;  
rōz farrōkh bād, māh mubārak bād! Chand  
sāl, chand rōz, chand māh, bisyār sāi arzānī-  
dār, yazashnē va nyāyēshnē va rādī va zōr  
barashnē. Ashahīdār awarē hamā kār ō  
kerfēhā, tan-dōrōstī bād, nekī bād, khub bād!  
Aēdūn bād, aēdūntaraz bād! Pa Yazdān va  
Ameshāspandān kāmē bād!  
Ashem Vohū (1).*

“In the name of the Lord, (who is) benevolent, the giver of blessings, and the bestower of kindness.

(May there be) good health for a long life; may glory be everlasting with righteousness; may the spiritual and terrestrial *Yazatas*, the seven *Amesha Spentas* come towards the radiant offering; may these blessings and desires be fulfilled. May there be joy of the religion of Zarathushtra amongst the people, may it be so.

Oh helpful God! May you preserve the King of the world, the whole community and (such and such person) with his progeny, for a thousand years. Keep them happy, keep them healthy, keep them thus; may the leadership of the worthy keep them permanent and everlasting for many, many years and innumerable centuries.

May there be thousand fold blessings, may the year be of good omen, may the day be glorious, may the month be auspicious, may you keep them worthy in offering worship, praise, libations and charity, for several years, days,

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months and incalculable years. May there be righteousness in the performance of all acts of merit. May there be good health, may there be goodness, may there be virtue, may it be so; may it be more so, may your wish be fulfilled according to the will of the *Yazatas* and *Amesha Spentas!*"

(Free translation)

Comment :

This prayer is recited as the final benediction upon the completion of a ritual, on all auspicious occasions. The Wise Lord is invoked to-

gether with the *Amesha Spentas* and the *Yazatas*, in order to seek their blessings. The prayer focusses on the well-being and good health of man who, as God's finest creation, must be healthy in both the body and mind, in order to weaken the power of evil, and thereby bring about greater goodness and virtue in this life. Man is enjoined to maintain a link with the spiritual world by undertaking to perform the right worship, praise, offering and charity in the physical world. In turn, man is promised everlasting happiness and joy according to the will of Ahura Mazda.

*Median nobles — Persepolis (6th-5th century B.C.)*

