

DG McIntyre - Metaphor in the Gathas - Part 2. The "Houses" of Paradise and Hell.

Part 2. House as a Metaphor for a State of Being.

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2. House as a Metaphor for a State of Being.

There are some instances in which Zarathushtra uses the word "house" literally, such as when he refers to ["...the rule of the house, or of the district or of the land..."](#) Y31.16,¹ and when he speaks of a person who has ["...placed house and settlement and district and land in strife and destruction..."](#) Y31.18.

But in most instances in which Zarathushtra uses the word "house" and its related terms "abode", "dwelling place", and "dwell", he does so in a metaphoric sense, indicating a state of being.

2.1 "Dwelling place", and "dwells".

In Y30.10, Zarathushtra speaks of the "dwelling place of good thinking".

["...and there shall be yoked from the good dwelling place of good thinking the swiftest steeds, which shall race ahead unto the good fame of the Wise One and of truth."](#) Y30.10

We know that good thinking (vohu mano) is reason and intelligence committed to goodness, the comprehension of truth and what's right (asha), however incrementally. So it is readily apparent that good thinking cannot "live" in a literal house. The only "good dwelling place" in which good thinking could exist, is a good state of being. So it is easy to see that "good dwelling place" in this verse, is a metaphor for a good state of being.

In the same way, in Y33.5, Zarathushtra speaks of the paths of truth wherein the Wise Lord "dwells".

["...I shall attain for us here the long-lived rule of good thinking and the paths, straight in accord with truth, wherein the Wise Lord dwells."](#) Y33.5.

Clearly, the ["paths, straight in accord with truth"](#) are not physical paths or locations. The Wise Lord could "dwell" in the paths of truth, only in a metaphoric sense, indicating His state of being.

In a related way, Zarathushtra speaks of an existence where ["the Wise Lord dwells in maturity"](#):

["...Hither, where \[aramaiti\] is in harmony with truth, where sovereignty is in the power of good thinking, where the Wise Lord dwells in maturity."](#) Y46.16.

This is another way of saying: that where aramaiti, truth and the rule of good thinking exist, the Wise Lord is to be found.

2.2 House of Worst Thinking, House of Deceit.

In the Gathas, there is no notion of Hell as a physical location – a place of punishment to which "bad" people go, after death. A moment's reflection makes it clear that we all (in our present reality, at least) are not only fallible, but are admixtures of "good" and "bad". The best of us has done something wrong, and the worst of us has done something good. So the whole notion of punishing in eternal hell a fallible life form who has done wrong, raises more questions about the justice (let alone the beneficence) of such an order of things, than it resolves – definitely not an order of things consistent with the beneficence and justice that are a part of asha (as discussed in Part 1.2 of this series, dealing with Fire and the Checkmate Solution).

Zarathushtra describes the existence that results from wrongful conduct as the "House of Worst Thinking" and the "House of Deceit." For example:

["Because of such \(evil\) rule, the destroyers of this world viewed their riches in the House of Worst Thinking..."](#) Y32.13.

"But the deceitful persons, bad in rule, bad in actions and words, bad in conceptions and thoughts, they shall be true guests in the **House of Deceit**." Y49.11.

"Neither are the Karpans our allies.....Theirs is a pleasure from (bringing) injury to the cow [metaphoric good vision] by their actions and their words, a doctrine which shall place them in the **House of Deceit** in the end." Y51.14.

"During their regimes, the Karpans and the Kavis yoked (us) with evil actions in order to destroy the world and mankind. But their own soul and their conception did vex them when they reached the Bridge of the Judge, (there) to become guests in the **House of Deceit** forever. " Y46.11. [more on "forever" below].

It is clear from the above verses, that the "House of Worst Thinking" and the "House of Deceit" are Zarathushtra's ideas of the consequences of wrongful conduct. What does he mean by these terms?

"Worst Thinking" is the opposite of good (or best) thinking. "Deceit" in the Gathas, is often found in opposition to truth (asha). It means the opposite of truth, i.e. that which does not "fit", which is untrue, inaccurate, mistaken, wrong. The worst thinking, and deceit are abstract concepts which cannot physically "live" in a literal, material house. They can only exist in a person's state of being. So the House of Worst Thinking, and the House of Deceit, are a state of being which is the opposite of good thinking (vohu mano) and truth (asha). That the House of Worst Thinking and the House of Deceit are metaphors for a type of existence or a state of being, is corroborated in Y30.4 where Zarathushtra expresses the same thought, but without metaphor:

"...the **worst existence** shall be for the deceitful..." Y30.4.

Similarly, in Y31.20, he says:

"...(But) a long lifetime of darkness, foul food, the word woe – to **such an existence** shall your conception, along with its (corresponding) actions, lead you, ye deceitful ones." Y31.20.

In this verse, Y31.20, Zarathushtra uses "darkness" and "foul food" as metaphors. "Darkness" refers to a state of ignorance, a state in which the person is deluded, not enlightened, does not see things clearly with understanding. And just as "foul food" is bad for the body, in the same way the vices of a person are bad nourishment for his soul. So this verse tells us, (without the metaphor of "House"), that deceitful (or wrong) thoughts and actions are poor nourishment (foul food) for the soul, and result in an existence that is unhappy (woe), and lacks understanding (darkness). The previously quoted verses tell us the same thing, except that they use the metaphors, House of Deceit, or the House of Worst Thinking, to describe the existence that results from wrong thoughts, words and actions.

So the "hell" of the Gathas – the "House of Worst Thinking" and the "House of Deceit" – is a state of being that is unenlightened and unhappy – the opposite of good thinking (vohu mano) and truth (asha).

In an Avestan fragment² composed long after the Gathas, hell is said to be reached in four steps: "The first step...laid him in the Evil-Thought Hell; The second step...laid him in the Evil-Word Hell; The third step...laid him in the Evil-Deed Hell; The fourth step ... laid him in the Endless Darkness."³

A later Pazand work, the *Mainyo-i-khard*⁴ states: " [verse 20] And hell is first Dushmat (evil thoughts), and second Duzhukht (evil words), and third Duzhvaresh (evil deeds); [verse 21] with the fourth footstep, the wicked man arrives at that which is the darkest hell.....[verse 31] ... their darkness is such-like as when it will be necessary to hold by the hand"⁵ i.e. very thick darkness, where a person cannot see for himself, and needs a hand.⁶

The "Endless Darkness" of the Avestan fragment quoted above, may likewise mean a darkness which is endless in the sense that it is very thick darkness, or it simply may have been an attempt (such as occurs in so many instances throughout the later texts) to provide an opposite for the notion of heaven as the "Endless Lights". For while the Gathas address the problem of evil in a linear fashion – through transformation (the changing of minds as discussed in Part 1.2 of this piece), the later texts address the problem of evil in a bi-polar fashion – the idea that there are two uncreated "gods", one all good and the other all evil, each spawning its own "good" and "evil" creations – dualism.

In their descriptions of "heaven" and "hell" both the Avestan fragment Yasht 22, and the Pazand *Mainyo-i-khard*, are highly metaphoric (although some people interpret their images literally), and indeed their descriptions sometimes have all the credibility of a horror story made to frighten the credulous. However, it seems clear that they follow the

Gathic conclusion that "hell" is a state of being created by evil thoughts, words and actions, which result in "darkness" – a state of being which is the opposite of enlightenment.

It is also interesting that in later texts, hell is described as a place where if a thousand men were closely packed within a single "span" (?), yet "...they (the men) think in this way, that they are alone; and the loneliness is worse than its punishment..."⁷ indicating, metaphorically, that hell is a state of being which includes an alienation and isolation that is far removed from Zarathushtra's notion of completeness (*haurvatat*)⁸

The Avestan fragment (Yasht 22), mentioned above, does not address the duration of this "hell" of evil thoughts, words and actions. The Mainyo-i-Khard does, calling it of "long duration"⁹ – not eternal or "forever".

Which brings us back to Y46.11. What could Zarathushtra have meant by wrongdoers being "...guests in the House of Deceit forever." Y46.11? Here is the full verse again.

"During their regimes, the Karpans and the Kavis yoked (us) with evil actions in order to destroy the world and mankind. But their own soul and their conception did vex them when they reached the Bridge of the Judge, (there) to become guests in the House of Deceit forever." Y46.11.

"Guests" would seem to indicate a temporary residence. But then, what could Zarathushtra mean by "forever"? Could he mean that such wrongdoers would remain in a state of wrongheaded delusion ("House of Deceit") forever? Such an interpretation would be inconsistent with his assertion that "...it has been fated for this world, Wise One, that the truth is to be saved for its (good) preference, that deceit is to be destroyed for its (false) profession..." Y49.3. If wrongdoers were to remain in a state of delusion forever, then evil would be forever with us, and would not be "destroyed" as Y49.3 tells us. The same objection would apply even if "House of Deceit" were not a metaphor for a deluded state of being, but was a location of torment to which people who had done wrong were confined. As long as such a place of torment existed, evil would still be with us – not just in the inhabitants of such a place, but in the maintenance of such a place of torment.

Such an interpretation (that wrongdoers will remain in a state of delusion forever) would also be inconsistent with Zarathushtra's profound realization that evil is defeated by changing minds – by "deliver[ing] deceit into the hands of truth" Y30.8, 44.14, and that this occurs through the law of consequences (and mutual, loving help), which is a part of the way things have been ordered (*asha*) (as discussed in Part 1.2 of this series, Metaphor in the Gathas).

In short, the idea of a permanent state of delusion for wrongdoers (or a permanent place of torment), is so inconsistent with key aspects of Zarathushtra's thought, that it is not a tenable interpretation. We need to puzzle out what Zarathushtra might have intended here.

The operative Gathic words in Y46.11 are *yavoi vispai* and their translation as "forever" or its equivalent, seems fairly uniform amongst those who have translated the Gathas.¹⁰

Taraporewala, states, in his commentary to Y46.11:

"*yavoi vispai* – For all time. We have *vispai yave* in Yasna 28.8. The implication is 'through endless ages'." (page 611).

Although in Y46.11, Insler translates *yavoi vispai* as "forever", in Yasna 28.8, he translates *vispai yave* as: "for a whole lifetime" (page 27).¹¹ Thus we have the possibility of a long duration of time that is something less than "forever". This is consistent with Y31.20, where a parallel thought is expressed, although with different words: "... (But) a long lifetime of darkness, foul food, the word woe – to such an existence shall your conception, along with its (corresponding) actions, lead you, ye deceitful ones." Y31.20.

Not being a linguist, I am not competent to express an opinion on possible linguistic alternatives for *yavoi vispai* in Y46.11. However, a contextual analysis may be useful. We are told in the later (Pazand) text Mainyo-i-khard that the Bridge of the Judge (sometimes called the Bridge of the Separator), is encountered after death, when the soul is attempting to make the transition from the material existence to the spiritual one. "Bridge" here is a metaphor for transition (from the material to the spiritual).¹²

It is clear that a person who exists in the "hell" of evil thoughts, words and actions can never make the transition to the state of pure wisdom which is the House of Good Thinking – Zarathushtra's idea of paradise, as discussed in the next section (Part 2.3 below). So perhaps what Zarathushtra is saying in Y46.11, is that a person who lives in evil thoughts, words and actions is always in a state of delusion, i.e. while he exists in the evil of bad thoughts, words and actions, his state of being always will be that of a deluded person, a person who does not comprehend truth – the House of Deceit. So the word "forever" would not mean he could never change. It would mean that evil thoughts, words and actions would always, at all times, result in the occurrence of a state of being that is deluded – the House of Deceit.

Both these conclusions – (1) "long lifetime", as well as (2) that evil thoughts words and actions always producing a state of delusion – are consistent with the rest of Zarathushtra's thought, and may provide an answer to Zarathushtra's intent in Y46.11.

2.3 House of Good Thinking, House of Song.

Zarathushtra refers to heaven or paradise as the House of Good Thinking and the House of Song. That "House" in these terms is a metaphor for a state of being is corroborated by Y30.4, where Zarathushtra states, without metaphor, that the reward for the truthful person is the best thinking.

"...the worst existence shall be for the deceitful, but the best thinking for the truthful person." Y30.4.

Indeed, in a thousand and one subtle and beautiful ways, without metaphor, Zarathushtra leads us to the conclusion that paradise is a state of being in which a person has attained and personifies, the amesha spenta.¹³ So "House of Good Thinking" is a metaphor for a state of being that is Wisdom personified. And "House of Song" is a metaphor for a state of being that is bliss – a metaphor that perhaps attempts to evoke the emotional high that beautiful music generates. Here are examples of how Zarathushtra uses the House of Good Thinking, and the House of Song for paradise:

"...those who rule over life¹⁴ at will in the House of Good Thinking." Y32.15.

"... Yes, let us set down His glories in the House of Song" Y45.8

In passing one might wonder: Why didn't Zarathushtra call his notion of paradise the House of Truth? Why the House of Good Thinking? Perhaps the reason is that paradise has relevance only for living beings, and for living beings, it is the comprehension of truth (vohu mano) that is relevant as a state of being.

One might also wonder: Why did Zarathushtra call paradise the "best thinking" Y30.4, or "the House of Good Thinking?" Y32.15. Why not the House of Good Action? It is a fundamental part of his teaching that good thoughts alone are not enough. They have to be translated into good words and good actions.

"Yes, those men shall be the saviors [saoshyanto] of the lands, namely those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching with actions in harmony with good thinking and with truth, Wise One. These indeed have been fated to be the expellers of fury." Y48.12.

Indeed, the later Avestan fragment, Yasht 22, states that a good person attains paradise in four steps:

"The first step...placed him in the Good-Thought Paradise; The second step...placed him in the Good-Word Paradise; The third step...placed him in the Good-Deed Paradise; The fourth step...placed him in the Endless Lights."
(SBE Volume 23, page 317).

It is apparent that the unknown author of this fragment, like Zarathushtra, believed that good thoughts alone are not enough, but that good words and good actions are also required. So the first level of achievement is good thoughts. A higher level of achievement is attained when good thoughts are translated into good words. And an even higher level of achievement is attained when good thoughts and words are translated into good actions. If this is so, why then does Zarathushtra describe his idea of paradise as the "best thinking" Y30.4, or "the House of Good Thinking?" Y32.15. Why not as the House of Good Action?

Perhaps the answer is that the first three stages of paradise described in this Yasht fragment, are achieved in the medium of this material world – with our thoughts, words and actions. Whereas ultimate completeness – when the reason for mortality ceases (*ameretat*) – exists in the reality of mind and spirit. Thus we start with good thinking in the material world, and end with the state of being that is the best thinking (or the House of Good Thinking) when we have made the transition from the material, to spiritual perfection (expressed metaphorically by crossing *Chinvat Bridge*).

Finally, we come to the enigmatical Gathic verse, Y51.15, in which the House of Song is also mentioned.

"What prize Zarathushtra previously promised to his adherents – into that House of Song did the Wise Lord come as the first one. This prize has been promised to you during the times of salvation by reason of your good thinking and truth." Y51.15.

This last verse, Y51.15, is unique in a number of respects.

First, what does Zarathushtra mean by "salvation" in this verse, Y51.15? We find the answer in Y51.20. Salvation, to Zarathushtra, is truth (*asha*) and good thinking (*vohu mano*):

".....let that salvation of yours be granted to us: truth allied with good thinking!..." Y51.20.

Second, this verse (Y51.15) equates the "prize" that is earned through good thinking and truth, with the House of Song ("What prize Zarathushtra previously promised to his adherents – into that House of Song..."). Now we know from other parts of the Gathas, that the *amesha spenta* are both the reward (prize) as well as the means of obtaining the reward (see Part 3.1.4 of this series for the evidence on which this conclusion is based). We also know that the *amesha spenta* are characteristics of the Wise Lord (see Part 3.1.6) and in fact are the qualities that make for divinity (see Part 3.2.1). Putting all these premises together, what conclusion do we come to?

If the *amesha spenta* are characteristics of the divine, and are also the prize (reward), and if, as Y 51.15 tells us, the prize is the House of Song, then the conclusion is inescapable: the House of Song is a state of being that personifies the *amesha spenta* – the qualities that make for divinity. In short, the House of Song – the Zarathushtrian paradise – is a state of being that is divine.

Finally, the first sentence of this verse (Y51.15) tells us that this paradise, this state of being, has been attained by the Wise Lord as the first one ("...into that House of Song did the Wise Lord come as the first one..." Y51.15). And the last sentence says that this state of being, this prize, also can be attained by the rest of us through our good thinking and truth.

These thoughts are likewise suggested by Zarathushtra's technique in describing the relationship between *asha* and *vohu mano* on the one hand, and *Ahura Mazda* and all the living on the other hand, in three distinct and different ways, alternating between these three ways throughout the verses of the Gathas. (1) He describes *asha* and *vohu mano* as allegorical beings, separate and distinct from the Wise Lord, but revered, worshiped, praised or served in tandem with Him. (2) He refers to *asha* and *vohu mano* as separate from, but allied with, or of a like nature with, Mazda and all the living; and (3) he refers to *asha* and *vohu mano* as an integral part of the nature of Mazda and all the living.

Here are a few verses in which Zarathushtra refers to *asha* and *vohu mano* as allegorical beings, separate and distinct from the Wise Lord, but revered, worshipped or served in tandem with Him.

"Come hither to me, ye best ones...-- **Thou, Wise One**, together with **truth and good thinking** -- ...Let bright gifts and reverence (for all of you) be manifest amid us." Y33.7.

"...**Thou, Wise One**, along with *truth* and **good thinking**...I shall very happily approach all of you, as I worship and praise." Y34.6.

Here are some verses in which he describes the Wise Lord, man, and all the living, as separate from, but allied with, or of a like nature with, *asha* and *vohu mano*.

[The Wise Lord] "The Wise Lord, who is of the same temperament with truth..." Y29.7.

[The Wise Lord] "...He who is allied **with good thinking** and the **good companion of sunlike truth**..." Y32.2.

[Man] "...I am eager for the **alliance of good thinking**..." Y49.3.

[Man] "...We respected him among you as the **good companion of truth**." 46.13.

[The Wise Lord] "...Wise Lord **allied with truth**." Y50.10.

[Man] "...the virtuous man whose soul is in **alliance with truth**..." Y34.2.

[Other life forms] "...the creatures **allied with truth** do prosper..." 43.6.

[All the living] "...the world **allied with truth**..." Y44.15.

[The Wise Lord] "...Thy tongue (which is) **in harmony with truth**..." 51.3.

[Man] "The priest who is just in **harmony with truth**..." Y33.6.

[Man] "...an existence **in harmony with truth**..." 44.8.

[Man] "...as he lives honestly **in harmony with truth**..." Y50.2.

Here are some verses in which Zarathushtra describes asha and vohu mano as an integral part of the nature of the Wise Lord, and other life forms.

[The Wise Lord] "...the Truthful One..." Y43.8.

[The Wise Lord] "... the truthful Lord, virtuous in His action..." Y46.9.

[The Wise Lord] "... the truthful Lord. Y53.9.

[Man] "...for the truthful person [ašaune]..." Y30.4.

[Other life forms] "...the creatures of truth [ašahya gaethao]..." Y31.1.

[Man] "... the souls of the truthful ones [ašaunam]..." Y49.10.

[Man] "...That the soul of the truthful person [ashaono] be powerful in immortality..." Y45.7.

[The Wise Lord] "...May He dispense through **His good thinking** (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Y43.16.

[Man] "...Through ... **his good thinking**, he shall be someone like Thee, Wise One." Y48.3

And in Y50.11, Zarathushtra equates the Wise Lord and truth – calling Him truth, the way he calls Him Wisdom.

"Yes, I shall swear to be your praiser, Wise One, and I shall be it, as long as I have strength and be able, o truth....." Y50.11

By depicting the concepts of asha and vohu mano as allegorical entities that are objects of worship, reverence and service, is Zarathushtra suggesting that these qualities are the essence of divinity and therefore worthy of worship?

And by treating the relationship between asha and vohu mano, on the one hand, and the Wise Lord and all the living on the other, in these three different ways – (i) showing them separate, (ii) showing them linked, and (iii) showing them integrated – is Zarathushtra suggesting that these divine qualities can be attained by all the living in a process of transformation, incrementally, until they are attained completely, and are personified? These questions are further explored in Parts 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 of this series, relating to the quality and nature of divinity.

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1. All references to, and quotations from, the Gathas in this paper are from the translation of Professor Insler, as it appears in The Gathas of Zarathustra, (Brill, 1975) ("Insler" hereinafter), unless otherwise specified, except that I leave "aramaiti" untranslated, inserting the word "aramaiti" in square brackets in place of the translated word. In fairness to Professor Insler, he may, or may not, agree with the inferences I draw from his translation.

2. Yasht XXII, but which, according to Darmesteter is not really a Yasht at all, (SBE Vol. 23, page 1), and whose date is unknown. This fragment is not in Gathic, and so was likely composed some time after Zarathushtra.

3. Yasht 22 verse 33, SBE Volume 23, page 320.

4. See The Book of Mainyo-i-khard, translated by E. W. West, (APA Oriental Press Amsterdam reprint). This work also exists in a Persian form known as Mino-khirad.

5. West, The Book of the Mainyo-i-khard, page 141.

6. In Yasna 31.12, Zarathushtra says: "...but in due course [aramaiti] shall come to terms with one's spirit where there has been opposition." Y31.12. I think by this he means (in part) that when a person finds himself in the darkness through his wrongful choices, it is the loving words and actions of others (in addition to the law of consequences), that help to dissolve the darkness. So mutual, loving, help is something that we all need to both give and receive, in order to make it.

7. Quoted from the Bundahish, as translated by E. W. West in SBE Volume 5, page 114. West in his footnote to this quotation, notes the similarity of this passage to a part of the *Arda Viraf Nameh*, which he translates as follows: "Compare Arda Viraf-namak (LIV, 5-6): 'As close as the ear to the eye, and as many as the hairs on the mane of a horse, so close and many in number, the souls of the wicked stand, but they see not, and hear no sound, one from the other; every one thinks thus, "I am alone." ' ". SBE Volume 5, page 114, footnote 2.

The Bundahish is a Pahlavi text consisting of a collection of fragments. The two oldest manuscripts of the Bundahish both came from India and were written on very old Indian paper in the second half of the 14th century anywhere from 1351 to 1397. According to E. W. West, the work as it now stands "is evidently of a fragmentary character, bearing unmistakable marks of both omissions and dislocations; and the extant manuscripts,...differ among themselves both as to the extent and arrangement of the text. Many passages have the appearance of being translations from an Avesta original, ...it is very probable...[from the lost] *Damdad Nask*..." (SBE Vol. 5, pages xxii to xxix).

8. For a discussion of Zarathushtra's notion of completeness (haurvatat) see Of Means and Ends, Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium 1991 (WZO 1998), pages 92 – 101; which may also be read in the Site Map section of www.vohuman.org, and on www.zarathushtra.com. See also discussion in Part 3.2.2 of this series, Metaphor in the Gathas.

9. West, The Book of the Mainyo-i-khard, page 141, and also 137.

10. Here are a few examples:

Azargoshasb: "...as they fall down in the abode of untruth, where they are obliged to dwell forever." (page 55);

Duchesne-Guillemin: "...For ever to be inmates of the house of Evil." (page 79);

Humbach: "... (and they will remain) for all time guests (attached) to the house of deceit." (Vol. 1, page 171);

Jafarey: "...because they have been all the time dwelling in the house of wrong." (page 52);

Mills: "...in the Lie's abode for ever shall their habitation be." (SBE Vol. 31, page 141);

Moulton: "...Their own soul and their own self shall torment them when they come where the Bridge of the Separator is, to all time dwellers in the House of the Lie". (page 374);

Taraporewala: "... (such) for all time (shall be) dwellers of the Abode of Untruth." (page 609).

11. Here are a few examples of how others have translated this part of Y28.8.

Azargoshasb: "...through all eternity." (page 3);

Duchesne-Guillemin: "...for ever" (page 89);

Humbach: "... for all the time" (Vol. 1, page 171) and in his commentary, he adds: "...or 'for the whole life-time...' (Vol. 2, page 26);

Jafarey: "forever" (page 30);

Mills: unknown (SBE Vol. 31, page 21-30);

Moulton: "for aye [ever]" (page 346);

Taraporewala: "eternity" (page 114).

12. for a discussion of the metaphors involved in the story of Chinvat Bridge in the Mainyo-i-khard, see **Buried Treasures** which appears in the Site Map section of www.vohuman.org.

13. For the evidence on which this conclusion is based, see Of Means and Ends, Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium 1991 (WZO 1998), pages 92 – 101; which may also be read in the Site Map section of www.vohuman.org, and on www.zarathushtra.com.

14. Here, "life" may be another way of saying ameretat – non-deathness, indicating, perhaps, that those who have attained ameretat are no longer bound to mortality, but may assume a mortal existence if they wish ("...[those who rule over life at will...](#)"), in order to help and guide in times when their help is needed. These words (in Y32.15) are ambiguous, and may reasonably be interpreted in other ways as well.