

Iranian Fire

M a z d a y a s n a

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Zarathustra and the Wise Lord

Mountains shaped like heroes

Creation, fire, and the stars

Kings, birds, and cosmic waters

20 FIGURES TO FIND IN THE LAND

ANCIENT IRAN; PARS,
MEDIA, AND WIDER
PERSIANATE WORLD

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The world circles the high mountain.

Zoroastrian Mythology Field Guide

Mazdayasna, often called Zoroastrianism in English, grew in ancient Iran and continued across Pars, Media and the wider Persianate world. Its stories speak of Ahura Mazdā, the struggle with Anra Mainyu, the first beings, radiant yazatas, culture heroes, the Činvat Bridge and the world's renewal. Different texts preserve different tellings, and later Middle Persian books often expand material that appears earlier in the Avesta.

This field guide treats mountains, ridges, firelit horizons, storm fronts, rivers and starry skies as prompts for attention. When you look for Harā Bərəzaitī in a chain of heights, Tishtrya in a bright star over rain clouds, or the Amesha Spentas in a many-peaked skyline, that is artistic interpretation: a way to remember stories by meeting the land with patient eyes. It is not a claim that the land was deliberately shaped to match them.

Zarathustra and the Wise Lord

CONTEXT

Where these stories come from

The oldest Zoroastrian materials are in the Avesta, especially the Gathas attributed to Zarathustra and the Younger Avestan hymns and ritual texts. They were composed orally in Avestan and written down much later, after long transmission by priestly communities. Many famous narrative details now widely repeated come not from the Gathas themselves but from later Avestan passages, Middle Persian books and Persian epic tradition. Texts in Middle Persian, including Pahlavi compilations, systematise creation, cosmic history, judgment and the final renovation in fuller narrative form. Modern readers therefore meet layered sources: early hymnic poetry, later liturgical and mythic texts, and still later summaries and retellings. Versions differ accordingly. Yima, for example, appears in Avestan texts as a primordial ruler and in later literature with expanded episodes; Tishtrya's struggle for the rains is clearest in the Yašts; and the Amesha Spentas are described more as divine beings or holy immortals than as characters in a single plot.

PRINCIPAL SOURCES

Principal sources used here are James Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part I: *The Vendidad*; James Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II: *The Sirôzahs*, *Yasts*, and *Nyâyis*; Stanley Insler, *The Hymns of Zarathustra*; Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*; Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Volume I; Ehsan Yarshater, editor, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; Michael Stausberg and Yuhon Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, editors, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*; and Touraj Daryaei, *Persian Stronghold: Stories of Iranian Identity*.



Stories travel across plateau, pasture, and river plain.

HOW TO READ THESE STORIES IN THE LAND

Start with large forms before fine detail: a mountain wall for Harā Bərəzaitī, a spread of distinct heights for the Amesha Spentas, a bright lone star for Tishtrya. In this guide, the landscape is a memory aid and a creative prompt. It is not evidence about ancient geology, settlement or ritual use.



Tishtrya drives the rain against drought.

Tishtrya

𐬰𐬀𐬭𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬭𐬀

Sirius star, rain-bringer, seasonal renewal, white horse, battle against drought, life-giving water, heavenly champion

In the Tištrya Yašt, Tishtrya, identified with Sirius, strives to bring the rains but is opposed by Apaoša, the demon of drought. Tishtrya first seems weakened because people have not offered worship well enough, then gains strength through praise and defeats his foe in the form of a white horse overcoming a dark one. The victory releases life-giving waters for fields and herds.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

A bright star rising over a dry horizon, with storm clouds gathering far off, suits Tishtrya's struggle.

Yima 𐬵𐬀𐬮𐬀 / Jam

radiant primordial king, world-expander, guardian of abundance, builder of the vara, ruler of a golden age

In the Avesta, Yima refuses the role of prophet but accepts kingship. Under his rule, beings multiply so greatly that he expands the earth three times. In a famous later episode of the Avesta, warned of a deadly winter, he builds a vara, an enclosure to preserve the best people, animals, and plants. Later Persian tradition develops Jamshid's splendor and fall in different ways.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

A broad upland basin ringed by hills can suggest the vara, sheltering life against a hard season.



Yima prepares a refuge against deadly winter.

THE TWO BEST FIRST TARGETS

Begin with Harā Bərəzaitī and the Amesha Spentas. Harā Bərəzaitī is easy to imagine in any commanding ring of mountains or long uplifted ridge: it gives you the cosmic scale of the tradition at once. The Amesha Spentas work well in grouped peaks, lights or presences, because they are usually encountered as a sacred plurality rather than a single dramatic figure.



I · SECTION I

I Creation and Cosmos

This section follows the best-known Zoroastrian creation stories across the Avesta and later Middle Persian books. The older hymns and the later cosmological compilations do not always tell the story in the same way, so where the record shifts, that difference is noted plainly.

Above: Creation stands under threat and order.

Ahura Mazdā

$$m \in \{m_1, \dots, m_k\}, \text{ or } m$$

Wise Lord, creator of the good creation, source of aša, lord of light, truth, and right order

Ahura Mazdā is the chief deity of Mazdayasna, maker of the good creation and upholder of *aša*, truth and right order. In the Gathas he is praised as wise, just, and worthy of worship. Later Zoroastrian books describe creation in stages under his care and frame history as a struggle in which his good creation will finally be restored.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A clear dawn over a high plain, where light steadily
reveals field, ridge, and ordered horizon.*

Anra Mainyu

$$y = 1 + u_6 - u_3 - u$$

Hostile Spirit, destructive adversary, attacker of creation, source of pollution, disease, death, and disorder

Ahura Mainyu is the destructive opponent in the cosmic struggle. In the older Gathic hymns, the opposition is expressed through hostile or destructive mentality rather than a fully developed later figure by this name. In younger Avestan and Middle Persian texts, he appears more clearly as Ahura Mazda's adversary, assailing the good creation but destined to be overcome in the final renewal.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A torn-looking badland or storm front, where shadow
seems to push against open light.*

Gāw ī Ēwdād

Gāw ēwdād

*primordial bovine, uniquely created beast, victim of assault,
source of beneficent animal and plant life*

In later Zoroastrian cosmology, Gāw ī Ewādā is the uniquely created primordial bovine. When the forces of destruction strike the first living beings, its death does not end life but helps earthly

life unfold. From its seed or bodily substance, in differing accounts, come useful animals and plants under divine protection and eventual renewal.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

A rounded hill above pasture, broad-backed against the sky like a resting beast.

Gayōmard

කයොමර්ଥ / Kayōmarth

*primordial human, first mortal being, luminous solitary figure,
ancestor of humankind in later tradition*

Gayōmard is the primordial human, described most fully in Middle Persian books drawing on older tradition. He stands at the beginning of human life in the good creation. After the assault of the destructive power, his death becomes the means by which human lineage continues: from him, in later accounts, the first man and woman come forth.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

A pale rock pillar on open ground, solitary and upright in strong sun.



Harā Bərəzaitī anchors the turning heavens.



II · SECTION 2

II Yazatas and Sacred Powers

This section gathers five yazatas and sacred powers known from Avestan hymns, later Middle Persian tradition, and modern Zoroastrian practice. Some are personified beings, while Atar is also the visible ritual fire itself. Descriptions vary by text and period, so where a story has more than one well-known form, that difference is noted briefly.

Above: The yazatas move through fire, water, wind, and light.



Mithra crosses the wide pastures at dawn.

Mithra

𐬨𐬀𐬯𐬀𐬰𐬭𐬀

*covenant-keeping, watchfulness, wide pastures, sunrise
brightness, thousand ears, ten thousand eyes, chariot-rider,
judge*

In the *Mihr Yašt*, Mithra rises before the sun, surveys the lands of the Aryans, and punishes oath-breakers while protecting those who keep faith. He rides in a swift chariot and cannot be deceived. In later Persian usage he is often linked with justice and royal fortune, though the Avestan hymns stress contracts, vigilance, and broad open country most strongly.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A broad upland plain under first light, with long
sightlines in every direction, suits Mithra's watchful
range.*

Anāhitā

𐬨𐬀𐬯𐬀𐬰𐬭𐬀𐬀𐬨𐬀𐬰𐬭𐬀

*mighty undefiled waters, fertility, healing, abundance, royal
favor, river power, purity, far-flowing life-giver*

The *Abān Yašt* praises *Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā* as a great, strong, undefiled river-power from whom waters flow for the world's good. She is invoked for fertility, health, victory, and sovereignty.

In some passages she appears in richly adorned human form; elsewhere the emphasis is on the cosmic water itself, so published retellings differ on whether to foreground goddess, river, or both together.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A snow-fed river spreading into green fields and orchards
gives a good landscape image for her blessing.*

Ātar

𐬀𐬰𐬭𐬀

*holy fire, visible ritual presence, truth-testing brightness, purity,
offering-bearer, household hearth, temple flame, discernment*

Ātar is the holy fire honored in ritual and praised as a divine force allied with *aša*, truth and right order. Avestan and later texts treat fire as both physically present and spiritually active: it carries offerings, reveals impurity, and stands with the truthful. Some sources speak of several kinds or grades of fire, while others focus on the single sacred presence tended in worship.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A steady flame seen against dusk, or a line of sunlit red
cliffs, can suggest Ātar's clear discerning presence.*

Vayu

𐬵𐬀𐬵𐬀

*airy expanse, wind-force, in-between realm, life-death
threshold, swiftness, power, ambivalent protection, vast
movement*

Vayu rules the airy space and is described in complex terms. In the *Vāyu Yašt* and later tradition, he can appear beneficent and life-supporting, yet he also belongs to the perilous interval between life and death. Because of this, published summaries often present two aspects of Vayu: one aligned with the good creation, another linked with the dangerous borderland no one escapes.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A mountain pass where hard wind rushes through empty
air makes a vivid place to picture Vayu.*



III · SECTION 3

III Kings, Teachers, and Epic Lives

This section gathers a prophet, culture-bringers, and heroic kings from Zoroastrian and wider Iranian tradition. The oldest layer is the Avesta, especially the Gāthās for Zarathustra; fuller life-stories of the others often come from later Avestan, Middle Persian, and New Persian retellings, where details and emphases can differ.

Above: Teachers and kings shape the legendary age.

Zarathustra

$\mu \in \mathcal{M}_+(\mathbb{R}^d)$

*prophet, poet, ritual speaker, teacher of aša, devotee of Ahura
Mazdā, composer of the Gāthās*

In the Gāthās, Zarathustra speaks in his own voice: questioning, praising Ahura Mazdā, and urging people to choose aša, truth and right order. These hymns are the oldest part of the Avesta. Later Zoroastrian tradition adds a fuller sacred biography, including opposition from rivals, royal support, and marvels surrounding his birth and mission.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

A high ridge at dawn, with one clear path climbing out of shadow, suits his songs of choice and right-mindedness.

Kərəsāspa

𐬔𐬀𐬭𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬵𐬀 / Garšāsp

*dragon-slaying hero, mighty warrior, monster-killer, traveler,
club-bearing champion, figure of later epic memory*

Avestan texts name Kərəsāspa as a great hero who smites monstrous beings. The older sources are brief, while Middle Persian and New Persian works tell much fuller adventures, including battles with dragons and other destructive creatures. Across versions he is remembered for immense bodily strength and for confronting threats too large for ordinary fighters.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A dark crag above a dry plain, like a crouched beast facing
a lone approach, fits his monster-fighting fame.*

Hōśang

Haošiiianηha

early king, civilizing ruler, law-giver, discoverer of fire in later epic, founder of useful arts

Hōšang belongs mainly to Iranian legendary history as shaped in later tradition rather than to long Avestan narrative. He is remembered as an early king who brings order to human life:

taming the world, encouraging agriculture and craft, and in famous Persian tellings discovering fire by chance when striking at a serpent with a stone.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A stony terrace beside running water, with blackened rock
catching evening light, suits stories of first arts and fire.*



Frēdōn confronts the tyrant-serpent.

Frēdōn

Θραētaona / Farīdūn

hero-king, foe of Aži Dahāka, restorer of just rule, victorious warrior, model of legitimate kingship

In the Avesta, Θraētaona is the hero who overcomes Aži Dahāka, the monstrous adversary. Later Middle Persian and New Persian traditions tell the better-known story of Farīdūn defeating Zahhāk and binding him on a mountain rather than killing him outright. Across these tellings, he stands for the return of rightful rule after oppression.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A sheer mountain face with a narrow ledge high above
the plain can evoke later tales of a tyrant bound fast.*



IV · SECTION 4

IV

Creatures, Waters, and Last Things

This section gathers beings, places, and future hopes that shape Zoroastrian views of danger, healing, judgment, and the world's renewal. The oldest Avestan texts and later Middle Persian books do not always tell these stories in the same way, so where versions differ, that is noted briefly. The landscape cues here are imaginative ways to notice their forms in land and water.

Above: Souls, monsters, and the last crossing fill the horizon.



The Amesha Spentas are the 'Bounteous Immortals,' a central group of divine beings in Mazdayasna associated with Ahura Mazdā and with core aspects of creation and ethical order.

Amesha Spentas

Aməša Spəntas

*Bounteous Immortals, divine companions of Ahura Mazdā,
ethical powers, guardians of creation, cosmic order*

The Amesha Spentas are a central group of holy beings in Mazdayasna, closely linked with Ahura Mazdā and with both right living and the created world. In the Gathas they appear as revered divine powers such as Asha, Vohu Manah, and Armaiti; later tradition presents a more settled group of six, each associated with a domain of creation, with Ahura Mazdā above or among them depending on the text.

Aṣi Dahāka

𐭮𐭥𐭩𐭪𐭫𐭲𐭠 / Zahhāk

*serpentine adversary, destructive monster, demonic force, later
tyrant-king figure, enemy of order*

In the Avesta, *Aži Dahāka* is a monstrous serpent-like being opposed to the good creation. In later Persian retellings he is often *Zahhāk*, a human tyrant marked by serpents growing from

his shoulders. Those later accounts greatly expand his story, especially his defeat and binding, but the constant thread is his role as a ravaging enemy of just order.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A black ridge split into twin gullies, like coiling necks
rising above a scorched plain.*



Every soul comes to the bridge.

Činvat Bridge

4) $\{x \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid x_1 = 0\}$

*bridge of judgment, passage after death, moral reckoning,
dividing line between destinies*

Činvat Bridge is the crossing every soul must face after death. Zoroastrian texts describe judgment there according to a person's thoughts, words, and deeds. For the righteous the bridge becomes broad and passable; for the wicked it narrows to a deadly edge. Later texts give fuller scenes of judges and the soul's encounter with its own deeds, but the bridge's testing role is already early.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

A narrow rock ledge over a ravine, widening suddenly into a safe shelf on one side.

Vourukaša

ᠮᠤᠯᠠᠭ ᠮᠤᠰᠤ ᠨᠢ ᠨᠢ ᠨᠢ ᠨᠢ

*wide cosmic sea, primal waters, source of rivers, healing plants,
marvelous creatures*

Vourukaša is the great cosmic sea already named in the Avesta and developed further in later Zoroastrian cosmology. It is linked with the world's waters, with the growth and dispersal of useful plants, and with extraordinary beings of the good creation. Later Middle Persian books describe it in greater detail, but its place as a vast life-bearing sea is not only late.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A broad salt lake or inland sea, with reeds, river mouths,
and distant haze merging water and sky.*

Saōśyant

101. 111. 121. 131. 141. 151. 161. 171. 181. 191. 201. 211. 221. 231. 241. 251. 261. 271. 281. 291. 301. 311. 321. 331. 341. 351. 361. 371. 381. 391. 401. 411. 421. 431. 441. 451. 461. 471. 481. 491. 501. 511. 521. 531. 541. 551. 561. 571. 581. 591. 601. 611. 621. 631. 641. 651. 661. 671. 681. 691. 701. 711. 721. 731. 741. 751. 761. 771. 781. 791. 801. 811. 821. 831. 841. 851. 861. 871. 881. 891. 901. 911. 921. 931. 941. 951. 961. 971. 981. 991. 1001. 1011. 1021. 1031. 1041. 1051. 1061. 1071. 1081. 1091. 1101. 1111. 1121. 1131. 1141. 1151. 1161. 1171. 1181. 1191. 1201. 1211. 1221. 1231. 1241. 1251. 1261. 1271. 1281. 1291. 1301. 1311. 1321. 1331. 1341. 1351. 1361. 1371. 1381. 1391. 1401. 1411. 1421. 1431. 1441. 1451. 1461. 1471. 1481. 1491. 1501. 1511. 1521. 1531. 1541. 1551. 1561. 1571. 1581. 1591. 1601. 1611. 1621. 1631. 1641. 1651. 1661. 1671. 1681. 1691. 1701. 1711. 1721. 1731. 1741. 1751. 1761. 1771. 1781. 1791. 1801. 1811. 1821. 1831. 1841. 1851. 1861. 1871. 1881. 1891. 1901. 1911. 1921. 1931. 1941. 1951. 1961. 1971. 1981. 1991. 2001. 2011. 2021. 2031. 2041. 2051. 2061. 2071. 2081. 2091. 2101. 2111. 2121. 2131. 2141. 2151. 2161. 2171. 2181. 2191. 2201. 2211. 2221. 2231. 2241. 2251. 2261. 2271. 2281. 2291. 2301. 2311. 2321. 2331. 2341. 2351. 2361. 2371. 2381. 2391. 2401. 2411. 2421. 2431. 2441. 2451. 2461. 2471. 2481. 2491. 2501. 2511. 2521. 2531. 2541. 2551. 2561. 2571. 2581. 2591. 2601. 2611. 2621. 2631. 2641. 2651. 2661. 2671. 2681. 2691. 2701. 2711. 2721. 2731. 2741. 2751. 2761. 2771. 2781. 2791. 2801. 2811. 2821. 2831. 2841. 2851. 2861. 2871. 2881. 2891. 2901. 2911. 2921. 2931. 2941. 2951. 2961. 2971. 2981. 2991. 3001. 3011. 3021. 3031. 3041. 3051. 3061. 3071. 3081. 3091. 3101. 3111. 3121. 3131. 3141. 3151. 3161. 3171. 3181. 3191. 3201. 3211. 3221. 3231. 3241. 3251. 3261. 3271. 3281. 3291. 3301. 3311. 3321. 3331. 3341. 3351. 3361. 3371. 3381. 3391. 3401. 3411. 3421. 3431. 3441. 3451. 3461. 3471. 3481. 3491. 3501. 3511. 3521. 3531. 3541. 3551. 3561. 3571. 3581. 3591. 3601. 3611. 3621. 3631. 3641. 3651. 3661. 3671. 3681. 3691. 3701. 3711. 3721. 3731. 3741. 3751. 3761. 3771. 3781. 3791. 3801. 3811. 3821. 3831. 3841. 3851. 3861. 3871. 3881. 3891. 3901. 3911. 3921. 3931. 3941. 3951. 3961. 3971. 3981. 3991. 4001. 4011. 4021. 4031. 4041. 4051. 4061. 4071. 4081. 4091. 4101. 4111. 4121. 4131. 4141. 4151. 4161. 4171. 4181. 4191. 4201. 4211. 4221. 4231. 4241. 4251. 4261. 4271. 4281. 4291. 4301. 4311. 4321. 4331. 4341. 4351. 4361. 4371. 4381. 4391. 4401. 4411. 4421. 4431. 4441. 4451. 4461. 4471. 4481. 4491. 4501. 4511. 4521. 4531. 4541. 4551. 4561. 4571. 4581. 4591. 4601. 4611. 4621. 4631. 4641. 4651. 4661. 4671. 4681. 4691. 4701. 4711. 4721. 4731. 4741. 4751. 4761. 4771. 4781. 4791. 4801. 4811. 4821. 4831. 4841. 4851. 4861. 4871. 4881. 4891. 4901. 4911. 4921. 4931. 4941. 4951. 4961. 4971. 4981. 4991. 5001. 5011. 5021. 5031. 5041. 5051. 5061. 5071. 5081. 5091. 5101. 5111. 5121. 5131. 5141. 5151. 5161. 5171. 5181. 5191. 5201. 5211. 5221. 5231. 5241. 5251. 5261. 5271. 5281. 5291. 5301. 5311. 5321. 5331. 5341. 5351. 5361. 5371. 5381. 5391. 5401. 5411. 5421. 5431. 5441. 5451. 5461. 5471. 5481. 5491. 5501. 5511. 5521. 5531. 5541. 5551. 5561. 5571. 5581. 5591. 5601. 5611. 5621. 5631. 5641. 5651. 5661. 5671. 5681. 5691. 5701. 5711. 5721. 5731. 5741. 5751. 5761. 5771. 5781. 5791. 5801. 5811. 5821. 5831. 5841. 5851. 5861. 5871. 5881. 5891. 5901. 5911. 5921. 5931. 5941. 5951. 5961. 5971. 5981. 5991. 6001. 6011. 6021. 6031. 6041. 6051. 6061. 6071. 6081. 6091. 6101. 6111. 6121. 6131. 6141. 6151. 6161. 6171. 6181. 6191. 6201. 6211. 6221. 6231. 6241. 6251. 6261. 6271. 6281. 6291. 6301. 6311. 6321. 6331. 6341. 6351. 6361. 6371. 6381. 6391. 6401. 6411. 6421. 6431. 6441. 6451. 6461. 6471. 6481. 6491. 6501. 6511. 6521. 6531. 6541. 6551. 6561. 6571. 6581. 6591. 6601. 6611. 6621. 6631. 6641. 6651. 6661. 6671. 6681. 6691. 6701. 6711. 6721. 6731. 6741. 6751. 6761. 6771. 6781. 6791. 6801. 6811. 6821. 6831. 6841. 6851. 6861. 6871. 6881. 6891. 6901. 6911. 6921. 6931. 6941. 6951. 6961. 6971. 6981. 6991. 7001. 7011. 7021. 7031. 7041. 7051. 7061. 70

*future savior, world renewer, final victory over evil, resurrection,
last judgment*

Saōšyant is the future savior figure in Zoroastrian expectation, tied to the final renewal of the world. Avestan texts use the term in more than one way, including for beneficent helpers, while later tradition often speaks of a culminating savior who will raise the dead, defeat evil fully, and bring about *frašō.kərəti*, the making-wonderful of creation.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

*A sunrise path across dark water, as if a far shore were
returning into sight.*

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Imagery and “Look for in the land” cues are artistic interpretation, not historical or scientific claims.

A NOTE ON RESPECT

A note on names, versions and respect: this guide uses Zoroastrian and Iranian names where practical, with English help only when useful. Stories in the Avesta, later Middle Persian writings and later Persian retellings do not always match, so this guide gives the widely published versions and notes broad differences without forcing them into one neat canon. Mazdayasna is a living tradition. This guide is an outsider's introduction.

For depth and correction, consult the tradition's own voices: its elders, teachers, cultural centres and community publications.

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Earth Heritage and Perceptual Resilience

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