

A Prayer Guide

*Suggested prayers for all occasions*¹

By Dr. Kersey H. Antia

First published in *FEZANA Journal* – Fall 1999

Prayer is the best means available to us to reach and touch Ahura Mazda and dialogue directly with Him, even as Zarathushtra does in every paragraph in Ys. 44 by asking rhetorically: “O Ahura! Enlighten me with the truth about what I am asking You.” Zarathushtra inquiringly asks Ahura Mazda so many questions in this Yasna but the answers are subtly contained in the questions themselves. We have the divine essence in all of us and we don’t have to seek it elsewhere, if we only learn to pray to ignite it and realize it within ourselves.

Through our daily prayers as well as a prayerful, beneficent (spenta) life, vve will begin to realize and cherish the divinity with us. And we will learn to confirm in our daily life and actions, what we affirm in our prayers.

There are also special devotional prayers that one can recite, on certain days of the Zarathushti calendar such as the New Year, parabhs, gahambars, jashans, and Gatha days. There are celebratory prayers for life’s happy occasions such as birthdays, navjotes, weddings, and anniversaries; and for invoking Ahura Mazda’s blessings at the start of any venture, such as a new job, a business, a project, a journey, a difficult examination or any other big or small undertaking. Upon death, the soul (urvan) of the departed is accompanied on its journey with special prayers and is thenceforth remembered with prayers, along with all other urvans and fravashis, year after year.

In times of sickness, trouble and sorrow, the human heart turns to the Almighty for strength and support. What prayers are most beneficial at such times in providing solace to us and helping us understand or accept the misfortune?

In this guide we suggest prayers for these various occasions and situations, focusing especially on those prayers that are recited by the individual layperson, based on past conventions and scriptural dictates. The prayers

¹ Compilation of materials, design and layout for this article by Roshan Rivetna.

mentioned here may be found in most *Khordeh Avesta* prayer books; a bibliography is provided in this Guide.²

General Recommendations.

Prayers may be offered at any time and any place, individually or together as a family, or as a communal ‘hamban-dagi’. Most Zarathushtis have a prayer corner in their homes, with a picture of Zarathushtra, photos of dear departed ones and a *diva* (oil lamp).

Prayers are generally recited after taking a bath, or washing the hands and face. During the day, pray facing the sun, and at night facing a lighted object. Do not pray facing North from whence blows the unwelcome, winter wind.

KUSHTI PRAYERS Daily

Minimally, a Zarathushti is expected to perform the kushti prayers daily, first thing in the morning and last thing at night. The prayers include:

- **Kemna Mazda**, entreating Ahura Mazda for the Good Mind and protection from evil.
- **Hormazd Khodae**, promising to actively fight against evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds, and promote righteous actions.
- **Jasa Me Avanghahe Mazda**, the declaration of faith.

The short kushti prayers end here. This may be followed by:

- **Sarosh Baj**, a prayer to Sarosh (conscience, internal voice), possessor of victorious spiritual weapons, with a commitment to choose the Good Religion.

Close with the four, short Closing Prayers [*see below*].³

CLOSING PRAYERS Offered after Sarosh Baj, Nyaeshes, Yashts, and other prayers

Closing Prayers are offered after Sarosh Baj, as well as after Nyaeshes and Yashts:

2 When you do not know, or cannot recite the appropriate prayers and don't have access to prayer books, according to our scriptures, it is equally efficacious and acceptable to recite just the *yatha-ashem* prayers, i.e.: **Yatha Ahu Vairyo** and **Ashem Vohu**.

3 Full text and translation of Kushti prayers is given in *FEZANA Journal*, Winter 1997.

- **Ahmai Raescha**, invoking blessings for a long and prosperous life.
- **Hazanghrem**, invoking blessings of good health.
- **Jasa Me Avanghahe Mazda**, invoking Ahura Mazda's help.
- **Kerfeh Mazd**, offering a life of righteousness for redemption from one's sins.

THREE CARDINAL PRAYERS Offered at the end of most other prayers

Three Cardinal Prayers are offered in closing at the end of most other prayers or can be recited by themselves at any time:

- **Ashem Vohu**, the Principle of Righteousness.
Asha (spiritual truth, the cosmic order governing the universe, righteousness) is good, (it) is best, (or Asha is the best good.) (It) is spiritual bliss. Spiritual bliss (literally, fulfillment of spiritual aspirations) accrues to those who follow Asha (purely) for the sake of attaining best of Asha (so as to merge with the divine, per Hoshbam and other prayers and not for any vicarious, secondary gain).
- **Ahunavar** or **Yatha Ahu Vairyo**, choosing the Lord in Life.
Just as the Lord is chosen (by us), so is the Prophet on account of his Asha (righteousness). Whosoever does godly acts in this world attains (the bliss of) the Good Mind. Whosoever nurtures the needy attains the Kingdom (Power) of God.
- **Yenghahe Hatam**, veneration of the living Ashavans amongst us.
(Rest assured) Ahura Mazda is well cognizant of whosoever amongst the living are adorable, because of their goodness, and whom, (them) men as well as women, we venerate on account of their Asha (righteousness).

NOURUZ (New Year) Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd

Iranian Zarathushtis have continued to follow their ancient traditions in North America:⁴

Chahar Shanbeh Soori is celebrated on the last Wednesday of the outgoing year with a bonfire, singing and music wishing good health and prosperity in the coming year, though earlier only Muslims celebrated it. It is a remnant of the last night of Panjeh which coincided with the Wednesday night before the downfall of the Sasanian Dynasty.

Haft-Seen table is set up the day before Nouruz and usually taken down after the 13th day of Nouruz. Laid with a white or green cloth, it includes 7 items beginning with

⁴ See details in *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 1993 and 1994.

the letter “S”: Seer (garlic), Seeb (apple), Sanjed (dried fruits), Serkhe (vinegar), Sabzi (sprouted vegetables), Sonbol (Hyacinth) and Sake (Coins). Other items on the table include: a picture of Zarathushtra, an oil lamp or candle, an Avesta prayer book, pomegranate, a spool of thread, rose-water and traditional foods.

Nouruz Day is celebrated with music, dancing and good food. The traditional heralds of Nouruz, Haji Firuz and Amou Nouruz, dressed in satin costumes with painted faces, make their appearance at Nouruz gatherings, bringing gifts for the children. Families and friends visit each other, bearing gifts. Appropriate prayers for Nouruz are:

- **Hormazd Yasht**, invoking Ahura Mazda’s blessings [p. 35].
- **Tandarosti**, showering blessings of health and happiness [p. 30].
- **Sizdeh Bidar**. On the 13th day of Nouruz, families leave the cities and picnic in the countryside.

KHORDAH SAL – Zarathushtra’s Birthday Mah Fravardin, Roz Khordad

The birthday of Zarathushtra, which initially coincided with Nouruz, is now celebrated on the 6th day of Nouruz, **Khordad Sal**.

Prayers performed by the priests for Zarathushtra’s birthday, include:

- **Jashan**, including the appropriate **Afringan** and **Afrin**, invoking the blessings of the departed and the prophet.

A good choice for individual prayers is:

- **Aa Airyema Ishyo**, the final goal of Zarathushti fraternity. “May the fellowship we ardently aspire to, come to the aid of male as well as female [note the emphasis on equality of sexes] followers of Zarathushtra in order to further good thinking on their part so that the act of (intelligently) choosing (Zarathushtra’s) Daena (religion) leads one to a spiritual reward, the bliss of attaining Asha (Perfection, which is the way of realizing Godhood per the Hosh- bam prayer and therefore be free of any physical, moral or mental ailments), which (indeed) is Ahura Mazda’s great divine plan.”

ZARATHUSHT-no-Diso – Death Anniversary of Zarathushtra Mah Dae, Roz Khorshed

Prayers performed by the priests for **Zarathusht-no-Diso**, the death anniversary of Zarathushtra, include:

- **Afringan** and **Afrin**, as appropriate, in honor of Asho Zarathushtra.

A good choice for individual prayer is:

- **Fravardin Yasht**, revering all souls from the first one to the last and celebrating all the creations of Ahura Mazda, including living human beings

whose Fravashis have even greater potency than those of the deceased. It celebrates the prophet's birth heralding the unity between man and nature and describes how "the whole universe rejoiced at the birth of Zarathushtra - even the waters and the vegetation world witnessed an increase in their growth and happiness prevailed over the whole spenta (good) creations." [Ch. 24],

PORSEH HAMEGANI Mah Spandarmad, Roz Hormazd

In the Iranian tradition, **Porseh Hamegani** commemorates those who lost their lives in the wars against the Arabs. Iranian Zarathushtis visit the anjuman hall and offer condolences. Prayers are offered by the priests and names of the departed are recited in each city, with:

- **Recitation of prayers from the Avesta.**

FRAVARDIN or Foroodak Day of Remembrance of the Departed Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin

The 19th day of Nouruz is celebrated as a memorial day, **Foroodak**, for the departed. Zarathushtis visit the dokhma (towers of silence), cemetery or final resting place of their loved ones.

Prayers performed by the priests include:

- **Fravardian Jashan**, including the appropriate **Afringan** and **Afrin** in honor of the departed.

A good choice for individual prayers is:

- **Satum**, adoring and invoking the Fravashis of all beings [p. 31].
- **Fravardin Yasht**, revering all souls and celebrating all the creations of Ahura Mazda [p. 32].

PARABH Name of the Mah (month) is the same as the name of the Roz (day)

☸ **Mah Ardibehesht - Roz Ardibehesht.** Ardibehesht (Av. Asha Vahishta) presides over Asha (righteousness), cosmic consciousness, cosmic energy, fire being one of its manifestations. Appropriate prayers for this day, to be prayed preferably at the fire-temple, are:

- **Atash Nyaesh**, litany in praise of the divine fire energy residing in each of us, reflecting God's inner essence. Four beautiful paragraphs

from the Gathas make it even more edifying and inspiring. It reminds us to tend to our inner nature and spiritual needs, so as to shine like heavenly light and qualify for living with the heavenly beings in the brightest of heaven. *[To be recited facing the fire or light]*.

- **Ardibehesht Yasht** [*p. 42*] is in praise of Ardibehesht Ameshaspand, and refers to various forms of healing and describes healing by *manthra* as the best. The heat of holiness (*Asha* or *Arda*) heals better with *manthra* than *kereta*, the surgeon's knife, it asserts. Ashavans were often known to have healing powers through their prayers.

☸ **Mah Khordad - Roz Khordad.** Khordad (Av. Haurvatat) presides over the waters. It also signifies perfect health; hence it behooves us to respect both with the following prayers:

- **Tandarosti**, invoking blessings of long life, health and happiness [*p. 30*].
- **Ardvisoor Nyaesh/Avan Yasht**, in praise of the female yazata Ardvisoor who presides over the waters. It signifies the life-affirming virtues of water, fertility, and the feminine species, and God's grace in bestowing them upon us. It enjoins us to respect women and not to pollute the waters.

☸ **Mah Tir - Roz Tir** is dedicated to the archangel Tir Yazad, who presides over the stars. An appropriate prayer is:

- **Tir Yasht**, in praise of the "glittering light" of Ahura Mazda.

In Iran, *Tirgan* is widely celebrated, primarily as a rain festival, invoking Tir Yazad to enhance the harvest and counter drought. There are many associated customs and legends (e.g. the legend of Arash the Archer) handed down from ancient times, that are followed to this day.⁵

☸ **Mah Amardad - Roz Amardad.** Amardad (Av. Ameretat, or immortality) has significance for the conservation and enhancement of the environment, ecology and the vegetation world. An appropriate prayer might be:

- **Zamyad Yasht**, in praise of Zamyad (Mother Earth) [*p. 36*].

☸ **Mah Shehrevan - Roz Shehrevan.** Shehrevan (Av. Khshathra Vairya) represents God's Good Rule and expectation for God's Kingdom to come. Thus, the occasion demands striving for justice, fairness and democracy in the world. Reflection on these values is afforded in:

- **Vohukhshathra Gatha**, the world's first attempt at establishing fair and democratic rule - God's rule on the earth.

5 See *FEZANA Journal*, Summer 1999.

☼ **Mah Meher - Roz Meher.** Meher (Av. Mithra) is an angel of celestial light, love, justice and friendship. Appropriate prayers, to be performed preferably in the fire-temple are:

- **Meher Yasht**, in veneration of Meher, angel of celestial light.
- **Khorshed Nyaesh**, in veneration of the shining sun “eternal, brilliant and emitting light”, followed by **Meher Nyaesh**, in veneration of Meher, angel of celestial light. Khorshed-Meher Nyaeshes are prayed together; they can be recited on any day, but only during the daytime.

☼ **Mah Avan - Roz Avan** known as *Avan Ardivoor Nu Parabh*. In India, Zarathushtis pray at the river banks or sea shores on this day [see *FEZANA Journal, Spring 1999*], in honor of Avan Yazad who presides over the waters. There is a tradition of offering flowers, coconut, rock candy and a sweet pastry - *dar-ni-pori*. Appropriate prayers are:

- **Ardivoor Nyaesh**, in praise of the female yazata Ardivoor who presides over the waters, and is also seen in relationship with various other Yazatas and elements of nature as well as the Gathas.
- **Avan Yasht**, in veneration of “all the good waters created by Ahura Mazda” and all His other creations.

☼ **Mah Adar - Roz Adar** is dedicated to venerating fire (the divine energy/essence in us). Until recently, Zarathushti families kept a coal hearth fire burning in their kitchen, which was cleaned and repainted as also were fire-temple, for this sacred day. Appropriate prayers are:

- **Atash Nyaesh**, a litany in praise of the divine fire energy [p. 33].
- **Ardibehesht Yasht**, in praise of Ardibehesht (Av. Asha Vahishta) and referring to various forms of healing [p. 33].

☼ **Mah Dae - Roz Daepadar, Daepmeher and Daepdin.** Dae (divine) represents God. Throughout the month of Dae, and especially on any Dae Roz, a communal jashan is held with a meal for all celebrants:

- **Dae Mah Nu Jashan**

☼ **Mah Bahman - Roz Bahman.** As Bahman (Av. Vohu Mana) presides over cattle (the animal kingdom), orthodox Zarathushtis do not eat meat during this month, and also avoid meat on Bahman, Mohor, (Mah) Gosh (Goosh), and Ram Roz in any month. A suitable prayer is:

- **Bahman Yasht**, in praise of Bahman (Av. Vohu Mana) [p. 35].

☼ **Mah Spendarmad - Roz Spendarmad.** Spendarmad (Av. Spenta Armaiti) presides over the beneficent earth. This observance, akin to Mother Earth Day of our times, is celebrated with:

- **Jashan**, with appropriate afringan and afrin, to reconsecrate the earth and to restore it to its purity if polluted by men in any way.

HAMKARS

The first seven days of each month are named after Hormazd and the 6 *Amesha Spentas*. The remaining days, shown in parentheses below, are associated with each Amesha Spenta, as their *Hamkar* (helpers). As a general rule, the Nyaesh or Yasht bearing the name of the Roz should be prayed on that day, but they can be prayed on other days also.

HAMKAR 1

HORMAZD, (Av) Ahura Mazda Dae-pa Adar, Dae-pa Meher, Dae-pa Din

Hormazd is the first principle of everything; the be-all and end-all of everything. On these 4 days, which are like the Sunday of the Christians, the Shabbat of the Jews or the Friday of the Muslims, all work is prohibited, and the day is devoted to the worship of Ahura Mazda. Specially appropriate are:

- **Hormazd Yasht**, in praise of Ahura Mazda. It depicts the various attributes and names of God and the willingness of God to assist us all for any spenta cause, only for the asking.
- **Haptan Yasht**, an inspiring prayer in praise of the 7 Amesha Spentas, written in post-Gathic language and thus closest in content to the Gathas.
- **Siroja Yasht**, in praise of all 30 Yazatas.

HAMKAR 2

BAHMAN, (Av) Vohu Mana Mohor, Gosh, Ram

The Hamkars of *Bahman* protect the good animal kingdom. Meat is therefore not to be eaten on these days. The appropriate prayers are:

- **Bahman Yasht**, (Vohu Mana) in honor of Bahman (Av. Vohu Mana) who presides over cattle (the animal kingdom).

- **Gosh Yasht**, a prayer for asking various boons and overcoming evil.
- **Ram Yasht**, in praise of the “righteous atmosphere which is the holy mentality”, which grants us our wish for eradicating evil from this world.

HAMKAR 3

ARDIBEHESHT, (Av) Asha Vahishta Adar, Sarosh, Behram

Ardibehesht or Best Righteousness, can be achieved by purifying our thoughts, words and deeds even as the holy fire, which it represents, purifies everything. Suggested prayers include:

- **Ardibehesht Yasht**, refers to healing by mantra [p. 33].
- **Atash Nyaesh**, a litany in praise of the divine fire energy [p. 33].
- **Sarosh Yasht Hadokht**, listening to the inner voice to attain Godhood.
- **Sarosh Yasht Vadi** (to be recited in the night time).
- **Behram Yasht**, for Behram (Verethregna) - “Conqueror of the enemy”.

HAMKAR 4

SHAHREVAR, (Av) Khshathra Vairya Asman, Aneran

Shehrevan represents the desirable kingdom of God. Proper reflection on these values may be found by reciting:

- **Vohu Khshathra Gatha**
- **Khorshed Nyaesh**, in praise of “light-emitting” sun; **Meher Nyaesh**, in praise of Meher (Mithra) angel of celestial light [p. 34].

HAMKAR 5

SPENDARMAD, (Av) Spenta Armaiti Avan, Din, Ashishvangh, Marespand

Spendarmad represents the beneficent, motherly, female aspects of Ahura Mazda, best represented by Mother Earth, which provides us with food and nourishment. Caring for Ahura Mazda’s creations and the environment is tantamount to worshipping Ahura Mazda. Prayers include:

- **Avan Yasht**, for Avan Yazad, who presides over the waters [p. 34].
- **Din Yasht**, in praise of “righteous, true knowledge”.
- **Ashishvangh Yasht**, in praise of Ashishvangh, the beneficent Yazata granting boons (‘Ashi’) to the righteous.

HAMKAR 6 KHORDAD, (Av) HAURVATAT Tir, Fravardin, Govad

Khordad (Av. *Haurvatat*) signifies Perfection, represented by perfect health of the body on a physical plane and perfect spirituality on a spiritual plane. Prayers include:

- **Khordad Yasht**, invoking abundance to the righteous.
- **Tir Yasht**, in praise of the “glittering light” of Ahura Mazda [p. 33].
- **Fravardin Yasht**, revering all the creations of Ahura Mazda [p.33].
- **Ashishvangh Yasht**, in praise of Ashishvangh [p. 35].

HAMKAR 7 AMARDAD, (Av) HAURVATAT Rashna, Ashtad, Zamyad

Amardad (Av. *Ameretat*), signifying immortality of the soul has significance for the enhancement of the environment, ecology and the vegetation world. Suggested prayers are:

- **Zamyad Yasht** eulogizes Aam (Mother Earth) and associates divine glory with mountains, apparently as they receive the sun’s glory first. It assures us righteousness will triumph over wickedness, describes how divine glory escapes the wicked and how things will be at the end of time.
- **Ashtad Yasht**, in praise of Ashtad (justice) and the glory of Iran, leading to righteousness and moral courage.

- **Rashna Yasht**, in praise of the righteous Rashna (Truth) who helps the righteous in various ways and circumstances.

GAHAMBARs

Maidyozarem Gahambar

Mid-Spring: Mah Ardwhisht, Roz Khorshed to Dae-pa Mihr

Maidyoshahem Gahambar

Mid-summer: Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed to Dae-pa Mihr

Paitishem Gahambar

Harvest season: Mah Shahrewar, Roz Ashtad to Aneran

Ayathrem Gahambar

Late Fall: Mah Mihr, Roz Ashtad to Aneran

Maidyarem Gahambar

Mid-winter: Mah Dae, Roz Mihr to Behram

Hamaspathmaidyem Gahambar

Last five days (Gathas) of the year

*Gahambar*s, are six seasonal festivals during the year, each lasting for five days. Gahambar is an occasion when Zarathushtis, young and old, rich and poor, come together for a prayer ceremony (Jashan) followed by a feast thanking God for each seasonal event.

Prayers performed by the priests include:

- **Afringans** and **afrins** appropriate for the Gahambar

For the lay persons, there are no special prayers for Gahambar. All that is required for them is to bring some fruits or other food as an offering for the occasion. If they cannot afford it, they are regarded as full participants by partaking of the *Myazda*, the consecrated foods, offered to the congregation following the afrinagan ceremony.

FULL MOON or NEW MOON

Mah Bokhtar Nyaesh, a litany in praise of *Maha* (the moon) who delivers to us the cosmic rays (*bokhtar*) and who is described as *gao-chithra* (cow-faced, *gao* representing divine vision in the Gathas) or life-origin, referring to

the germinating property of the moon's rays (which has been confirmed by modern science). This nyaesh can also be prayed on any other day.

JASHAN-e SADEH **Mah Vohuman, Roz Mihr**

An ancient mid-winter festival celebrating the discovery of fire in pre-historic times, Jashan-e Sadeh is still celebrated in Iran and is being revived in North America. [See FEZANA Journal, Winter 1996], The ceremony includes the lighting of a large bonfire, as the priests recite the names of ancient heroes and lead the gathering in a recitation of:

- **Atash Nyaesh**, a litany to divine fire energy, represented on this earth, by fire [p. 33].

THANKSGIVING PRAYER **Grace Before Meals**

The following **Jamvani Baj** [from *Haptan Yasht 3.1*] is an appropriate prayer for reciting as grace before a meal;

**Ba name Yazad, bakhshayandeh bakhshayazgar meherban!
Hormazd Khodae itha at yazamaide. Ahurem Mazdam, ye
gamcha ashemcha dat apascha dat urvaraoscha
vanghahuish, raochaoscha dat bumimcha, vispacha vohu.
Ashem Vohu -1.**

In the name of the Lord Ahura Mazda (who is) the bestower of all good things, the forgiver of sins, and loving. Here we revere Ahura Mazda who created the animals and grains, who created the waters and vegetation, who created beneficent lights (of the sky), and the earth and all (other) good things. Ashem Vohu - 1.

Another excellent prayer for thanksgiving is:

- **Doa Nam Setayashne (Be Nam Setayesh)** for Ahura Mazda [p. 30].

PIRS (SHRINES)

Pir-e Herisht

Mah Fravardin, Roz Amardad to Khorshed

Pir-e Sabz (Chak Chaku)

Mah Khordad, Roz Ashtad to Aneran.

Pir-e Narestaneh

Mah Tir, Roz Spendarmad to Adar

Pir-e Banoo

Mah Tir, Roz Meher to Behram

Pir-e Naraki

Mah Amardad, Roz Meher to Behram

Among many longstanding traditions followed by Iranian Zarathushtis even today, is visiting pilgrimage places **pirs** [see page 55] which dot the mountainsides, mostly near the town of Yazd. While Zarathushtis may visit the pirs at any time of year, most popular are the annual pilgrimages on certain days in the summer at each shrine. They are more of a historical than religious significance, and serve as havens for Zarathushtis to gather and celebrate the Zarathushti spirit without outside interference.

There are no special prayers to be offered at the pirs. Any prayer or ceremony appropriate for the day may be offered individually or by the priest (such as a Jashan).

SHAB-e YALDA

(Mah Dae, Roz Dae-pa Adar)

Yalda is an ancient Persian festival, believed to have influenced the traditions of Christmas and the Christmas tree [see *FEZANA Journal, Winter 1998*]. It is celebrated on December 23rd, the longest night of the year, with singing, dancing, poetry reading and feasting.

There are no special prayers for the Yalda festival.

BIRTHDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES, and other Joyous Occasions

On *joyous occasions* such as birthdays and anniversaries, Parsis decorate their houses with 'chalk' designs, hang flower garlands (*torans*) on the doorways, dress up in new clothes, distribute sweets to friends and relatives, give alms to the needy and visit the fire temple. Appropriate prayers, after recitation of the kushti prayers, are:

- **Hormazd Yasht**, invoking Ahura Mazda's blessings [p. 35].

- **Doa Nam Setayashne (Be Nam Setayesh)** for Ahura Mazda [p. 30].
- **Tandarosti**, showering blessings of health and happiness [p. 30].

NAVJOTE, or SEDREH PUSHI (Initiation Ceremony)

While deeply religious in significance, the *Navjote* or *Sedreh Pushi* [see *FEZANA Journal, Winter 1997*] is a happy and joyous occasion, celebrated with eclat in the presence of family and friends, with music and feasting. Prayers recited during the Parsi Navjote ceremony are:

- **Patet**, prayer of repentance (nowadays by the priest on behalf of the child).
- **Din no Karmo**, Declaration of Faith (priest and child).
- **Hormuzd Khodae**, girding with the Kushti (priest and child)
- **Jasa me Avanghahe Mazda**, Confirmation of Faith (priest and child)
- **Tandarosti**, showering of blessings on the new initiate (priests).

WEDDING CEREMONY

A Zarathushti fulfills one's most important mission on this earth - procreation and raising of pious children who will bring about Frashokereti, through the bonds of marriage. The Parsi and Iranian *wedding ceremony* are described in *FEZANA Journal [Spring 1995]*, Iranians have a different Ashirwad which is in a language comprehended by them:

- **Ashirwad**, affirmations by the bride and groom, advice and admonitions by the priests, and blessings naming illustrious ancestors.
- **Tandarosti**, showering of blessings on the bride and groom [p. 30].

The last (Vahishtoisht) Gatha is also called a Wedding Song.

DEATH CEREMONIES (for first 4 days)

Different sects pray some or all of the prayers suggested here, depending upon their traditions, preferences or time constraints. Upon the **death** of a loved one, place a divo (oil lamp) or candle near the body and recite **ashem vohu** continuously, by the bedside. Prayers, offered to bring solace and support to the soul of the departed as well as the living, are:

- **Sarosh Yasht Vadi** may be recited every night for 3 nights.
- **Patet Ravan-ni**, prayer of repentance for the departed.

At the **Paydust** ceremony (funeral) the priests pray:

- **Ahunavad Gatha**

Sarosh Nu Patroo (Kardeh-e Sarosh) is performed immediately after sunset for three nights, only after the dead body has been disposed of. It includes: **Sarosh Baj, Aiwisuthrem Gah, Sarosh Yasht Vadi, Patet Ravan-ni** and **Kardeh i Sarosh**. Lay persons can also recite these prayers (except **Kardeh i Sarosh**).

At the **Uthamna** ceremony (memorial) on the third afternoon, donations are made by family and friends for a worthy charity in memory of the deceased. The priests pray:

- **Sarosh Baj, Uzirehn Gah, Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh** (twice - first for self and second for the deceased), **Vispa Humata, Nam Setayashne, Char Disa No Namaskar, Patet Ravan-ni** and **Dhoop Nirang**. (**Tandarosti** used to be performed for the eldest son, in case of the father's death, and for the second-eldest son, in case of the mother's death; both are responsible for their parents' religious ceremonies after death).

At the **Chahrum** ceremony at dawn on the fourth day, as the soul ascends to the heavens, the priests pray:

- **Sarosh Baj, Havan Gah, Atash Nyaesh, Ravan ni Patet, Hoshbam** and **Dhoop Nirang**, followed by an **Afringan** for **Daham Yazad, Vispaesha Arda Fravash Beresad, Daham Yazad** and **Sarosh**. This is the first afringan prayed for the deceased who is now an 'anoush-e ravan' and belongs fully to the other world; whereas for the first 3 days the soul is in transition, lingering near the earth.

Note: For the first three days, up to the **Chahrum**, prayers (**Farajyat** with the appropriate **Yashts**) used to be offered continuously, either by family members or a priest, at the place where the body was laid for the last rites.

In the absence of any priests, as a last resort, lay persons can perform the **Paydust, Sarosh Nu Patroo, Uthamna** and **Chahrum** prayers. For the

Paydust prayers, the *paywand* (union) must be maintained by two persons holding a white handkerchief between them, while saying the prayers, until the body is laid to rest.

ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH (4th, 10th, and 30th day, and subsequently monthly and yearly anniversaries)

The loved one is remembered at each death anniversary by the priests offering prayers at the fire-temple:

- **Baj** and **Yazeshne** (can be done only where the higher category of *Yozdathregar* mobeds are available, mostly in Iran and India).
- **Afrinagan**, remembering the souls of the departed.
- **Satum**, adoring and invoking the Fravashis of all beings [p. 31].
- **Farrokshi**, includes portions of the Satum and the **Fravardin Yasht**.

Family members may remember loved ones by reciting:

- **Satum**, adoring and invoking the Fravashis of all beings [p. 31].
- **Fravardin Yasht**, revering and celebrating all creations [p. 32].
- **Patet Ravan ni**, prayer of repentance for the departed.

IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY AND TROUBLE

When faced with inimical forces and wicked ones, we can, like Zarathushtra, reflect on the Gathic prayers, especially:

- **Gathas**: Ys.29.10-11, Ys.30.7-11, Ys.31.15-22, Ys.32, Ys.33.1-4, 12-14, Ys.34, Ys.46, Ys.48.7-12 (the first two Gathic verses of Kemna Mazda are excellent too, for this purpose), Ys.49 (para. 11 in particular), Ys.50, Ys.51.16-22, and Ys.53.6-9.

Also beneficial at such times is recitation of the following prayers:

- **Hormazd Yasht**, invoking Ahura Mazda's blessings [p. 35].
- **Behram Yasht**, Behram (Verethregna) -“conqueror of the enemy”.
- **Vanant Yasht**, “victorious courage, smiter of evil”.
- **101 Names of Ahura Mazda, Yatha Ahu Vairyō and Ashem Vohu**.

Popular among Parsis these days are various ‘*nirangs*’, or efficacious short prayers, one such being:

Nirang of Mushkil Asan Behram Yazad [*see Prayer Books, p. 34*].

PRAYERS FOR GOOD HEALTH AND HEALING

In times of illness, recitation of the following prayers will be helpful:

- **Aa Airyema Ishyo.** The Avesta highly recommends this prayer for reaching perfection and holistic healing [*see page 32*].
- **Ardibehesht Yasht**, refers to various forms of healing and describes healing by *manthra* as the best. It is often therefore used for healing by auto-suggestion, hypno-therapy, and what is nowadays well recognized as “mind-over-matter” form of healing. [*See page 42*].
- **Vanant Yasht.** “victorious courage, smiter of evil”.
- **Hom Yasht**, seeking blessings of good health.

Our Avesta is replete with prayers to invoke blessings of good health and long and happy life; among the more familiar ones are:

- **Tandarosti, Ahmai Raescha and Hazanghrem.**

TO GIVE THANKS, ON ANY FESTIVE OCCASION, OR ASK HELP TO OVERCOME DIFFICULTIES

To give thanks for any reason, such as when a desire has been fulfilled, or on any festive occasion, or to ask Ahura Mazda’s help to overcome difficulties or grant a special favor, the **Machi ceremony** is often performed by priests at the individual’s request [*p. 44*].

FOR A NEW HOME, NEW JOB, NEW BUSINESS OR ANY NEW VENTURE

To invoke blessings on a new home, business or any major project, or to invoke God's favor for any cause or circumstances, priests are invited to perform a **Jashan** Ceremony:

- **Jashan**. The appropriate **Afringan** and **Afrin** are recited by the priest with offerings of sandalwood, sweets, fruits and flowers.

Appropriate prayers to be recited by the family, include:

- **Hormazd Yasht**, invoking Ahura Mazda's blessings [p. 35].
- **Satum**, invoking blessings of departed loved ones [p. 31].
- **Tandarosti**, showering blessings of health and happiness [p. 30].

ON ANY OCCASION, ANY TIME, ANY PLACE

When in doubt about what to pray, the following simple prayers are the best. They can be recited at any time and any place (e.g. when starting on a family car trip, or when lost, or in danger or as grace before meals, or simply to keep one's mind and heart on God ...):

- **Yatha Ahu Vairyo** and **Ashem Vohu** [p. 29].

Bibliography of Prayer Books

Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians by Framroze Rustomjee, 663 pp., 1976. Part I (102 pp.) reprinted in 1999 by Dr. Homi Dhalla's WZCF. Prayers in Roman script with a line by line English translation.

Khordeh Avesta by Tehmurasp Rustamji Sethna, 210 pp., 1980. Prayers in Roman Script with a translation in English on the facing page, with explanatory notes.

Yashts by Tehmurasp Rustamji Sethna, 478 pp., 1976. 21 Yashts in Roman script with a translation in English on the facing page, with explanatory notes.

The Story of Mushkil Aasan Behram Yazad, 48 pp. distributed by Zoroastrian Studies, Mumbai.

Asha Vahishta by Dastur N. D. Minochehr-Homji, 352 pp., Mumbai, 1998.
Khordeh Avesta .prayers in. Roman script with explanations in English.

Khordeh Avesta by Kavasji Edulji Kanga, 510 pp, 1976. Prayers with translations in Gujarati.

Khordeh Avesta by Maneck Furdoonji Kanga, 1993, published by Bombay Parsi Panchayet. Transliterated and translated into English, with copious explanatory notes.

Let Us Pray to Ahura Mazda, edited by Noshir H. Vajifdar, Ootacamund, India, 1984.

For ordering information, contact *The Zoroastrian Shop*, New Jersey, tel: (609) 768-8351 or Marzban Giara, 667 Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Mumbai 400 014, India, tel: +91 22 416-6204. ■