



REVIEW ARTICLE

A COMPARISON OF THE ANCIENT ZOROASTRIAN FLOOD SAGA AND THE STORY OF NOAH IN  
THE BOOK OF GENESIS

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ABSTRACT

*A Comparison of the Ancient Zoroastrian Flood Saga and the Story of Noah in the Book of Genesis* concerns the myth as related to Noah in the Book of Genesis, which originated in the ancient Near East. Commonalities among Noah's Ark and ancient Sumerian and Babylonian flood stories include a chosen hero, godly wrath, and flood warnings, instructions to build a mechanism to survive the flood, gathering of animal and human lives, survival, and repopulation. This article contextualizes and compares overlapping features of Mesopotamian, affirming the ancient Zoroastrian flood myth as an important part of the myth's overall, cross-cultural universality.

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INTRODUCTION

The global floodstories found in many cultures are tales of great floods caused by a god or gods to destroy creation as a form of retribution against humans, and to ecologically restore the planet. The features of the ancient Near East flood myths point to a common origin, with various scholars proposing a number of interpretations. This article concerns the mostly ignored Ancient Zoroastrian flood myth in relation to the story of Noah in the Book of Genesis, a myth which originated in Mesopotamia in the ancient Near East in the area of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers in present-day Iraq. For well over a century, scholars have recognized that the biblical story of Noah's Ark is based on older Mesopotamian models. Interestingly, there are many links between this story and the Sumerian and Babylonian floodstories featuring the heroes Ziusudra, Atrahasis, and Utnapishtim.

The Biblical Book of Genesis (6-9) preserves the enduring Mesopotamian Flood story:

The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his

heart. So the Lord said, 'I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord (6:5-8).

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight.... And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh.... Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife...two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive' (6:11-18).

Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals... to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I

have made I will blot out from the face of the ground' (7:1-5).

In Genesis 7-8, the flood continues for forty days and forty nights, and at the end of that time, only Noah and those in the ark are left. At the end of the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rests on the mountain of Ararat. Noah opens the window of the ark and first sends out the raven, and then the dove to make certain the waters have subsided and the land has dried. God then orders Noah to leave the ark, bringing every living creature with him.

The general scholarly consensus is that the recognized biblical flood story is most likely based on two sources. The first version, known as the Priestly source, as described in the Torah, provides the basis for the second version as stated in the Book of Genesis. In the Hebrew Bible, the God Yahweh brings about the destructive flood because of the sinful acts of humans, and Noah is chosen to build the ark and save his family and animals.

YHWH saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And YHWH was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

So YHWH said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of YHWH (6:5-8).

### Historical Background

The Genesis account of the flood story is better appreciated against a background of ancient Mesopotamian flood stories told by the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Sumerian writers. The many known versions of the Mesopotamian flood story are more or less adapted from an older version. The earliest known thus far, dating from the third millennium BCE, is the story of Eridu Genesis, written in Sumerian cuneiform on clay tablets. In this Sumerian flood story, the hero, King Ziusudra, hears the voice of a god conveying to him the divine assembly's decision to engulf all cities and all living beings in a storm lasting seven days and seven nights, destroying all that has been created. The king is ordered to gather his family, the seed of mankind, and the best of all living beings—only they will survive the flood to repopulate the Earth (Lambert 1969:138-45)—and build an enormous boat according to certain specifications.

In the Akkadian Atrahasis Epic, one of three Babylonian versions from the second millennium BCE, the hero, Atrahasis, is introduced as the ancestor of the known flood stories, including the biblical story of Noah. In the epic, Atrahasis describes how lesser gods, tired of the demanding responsibility of having to feed their higher gods, refused to continue. Hearing their objections, the superior gods created men out of clay to do the work and please all the gods. However, the men reproduced, and overpopulated the planet. All the noise bothered the gods in the heavens and disturbed their sleep, so they decided on total destruction. However, god Enki warns Atrahasis about the coming flood, and is ordered to build a boat, with a roof, walls, and a door, and bring his family and all kinds of living seeds on board. He is told there will be seven days and seven nights of destructive rainstorm that will

destroy everything on earth, except for those on the ship (Lambert 1969:67-71).

Similar stories are preserved in the Epic of Gilgamesh, which has origins rooted in the fourth and third millennium BCE. In the later Old Babylonian and Assyrian retellings circa the second-first millennium BCE, the hero of the flood event is Utnapishtim. The Epic of Gilgamesh is about adventure, morality, and tragedy. King Gilgamesh, a demigod in search of immortality, meets Utnapishtim who tells him the story of the flood and his survival. Utnapishtim is similarly warned by a god about a seven-day rain and flood, and is instructed to build a vessel to save his family and the animals. Given the close resemblance of the stories, it is often assumed these epics referred to a single event, with only the heroes' names changed. On Table XI, Utnapishtim writes, 'The heart of the Great Gods moved them to inflict the Flood.' The gods said, 'Make all living beings go up into the boat.... The boat which you are to build, its dimensions must measure equal to each other: Its length must correspond to its width.... When a seventh day arrived.' Utnapishtim continues, 'I sent forth a dove and released it. The dove went off, but came back to me.... I sent forth a swallow and released it.... but came back to me... I sent forth a raven and released it... but doesn't circle back to me. Then I sent out everything in all directions...' (Kovacs 1989:96-103). In this story, the ark rested on Mount Nisir.

Fragments of the Mesopotamian flood story spread throughout the region as far as Rome and Greece. Similarly, Xisuthros, the Greek name of Sumer's Ziusudra, is known from the writings of the priest Berossus (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE) of the Babylonian temple of the great god Marduk. Berossus chronicled the great flood story in Greek, relaying that the god Kronos (Cronus) told Xisuthros that mankind would be destroyed by a flood and that he should build a boat and take his wife, children, and friends on board. After the flood subsides, he is told, the boat will become grounded upon a mountain, and he should release the birds to see if they return to the ship.

Similar to the Ancient Greek sources, the gods revolt against humans, due to the degeneration of mankind, and punishment is ordered by Zeus to bring about a flood followed by a restoration for those who were saved in the vessel. The Deucalion myth, as one of the few Greek flood stories, is similar to Noah's story. The gods, angry at humans for creating wars, decide to punish them with a flood. Prometheus the Titan directs his son Deucalion to build a chest ark for himself and his wife Pyrrha. After nine days and nights of floating, the vessel rests on Mount Parnassus. This scenario remains the basic plot for several subsequent flood stories and their heroes, including the biblical Noah, dating from the first millennium BCE. It is in this schema that the Indo-Iranian flood myth, and the Zoroastrian version in particular, are positioned.

### Indo-Iranian Yama

Yama is the hero of the Indo-Iranian flood myth, rooted in Indo-European mythology. Analyses of Indo-Iranian myths reveal a shared belief that humankind had two progenitors, the Proto-Indo-European first \*Yemos 'Twin,' and his brother, the second \*Manu 'Man.' From the sacrifice of \*Yemo and \*Manu, the world and, with it, the birth and death cycle, are set in motion. The name \*Yemo, which is common to Indo-Iranian cultures, becomes Yama and Yima, both preserved respectively in the ancient religious texts of the Indian Vedas (Yama), and

Iranian Zoroastrian Avesta (Yima) (Mallory1989:140). Vedic Yama is the son of god Vivasvant, and Yamī is his twin sister. Avestan Yima is the son of Vivanhvant; he has a twin sister, Yimī. Notably, Yama is the Proto-Iranian and Old Persian name of Avestan Yima. In Norse mythology, the name of the giant Ymir also shares the same origin. In the Buddhist traditions of China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, Yama develops differently, but he is still the King of the underworld and is associated with the dead, afterlife judgment, punishment, hell, purgatory, the karmic cycle, and rebirth, and, in the Tibetan Buddhist version, his consort is also Yami.

#### Indian Yama

In Hindu mythology, Yama, as the head of the human race, is the beginning of human life. He is referred to as a god, the first man to die, the father of the human race, the king of the dead and the underworld, sovereign over hell and the south direction. Similar to the story of Adam and Eve, Yama and Yamī became the progenitors of the human race, and Yama's death marks the origin of sacrificial death (Zaehner1961:132-135). From this point on, Yama is identified with *mṛtyu*, or 'death.' Conceptually similar to the Vedic *Puruṣa*, as the first to die, Yama is like the cosmic man, whose sacrifice by the gods brought about creation, discovering the path from earth to the other world by choosing death over immortality. Rig Veda (10.13-14), the oldest Vedic text, describes Yama as the first immortal to choose death, and open the path to the heavenly world for all other beings. In choosing mortality, he has shown virtuous men the path to the immortal abode of the gods wherein all beings reside forever. At the funerary gathering, Yama as the king of the dead is evoked with the recitation of the Vedic hymn (Rig Veda 10.14, trans. Wilson vol. IV, 2001). Yama is invited to the event to lead the dead, and the dead are guided to follow the path of Yama to heaven:

Worship with oblations Yama, king, son of Vivasvant, the aggregation of mankind, who conducts those who are virtuous over the earth, and opens to many the path.

Yama, the chief, knows our well-being: this pasture no one can take from us, By the road by which our forefathers have gone, all who are born along the paths they have made for themselves (Verses 1-2).

[addressed to the dead]:

Depart, depart, by the former paths by which our forefathers have departed; there shall you behold the two monarchs Yama and the divine Varuṇa rejoicing in the Svadhā.

Be united with the *Pitṛs*, with Yama, and with the fulfilment of your wishes in the highest heaven; discarding iniquity, return to your abode, and unite yourself to a luminous body (Verses 7-8).

In the Hindu tradition, in the book of Shatapatha Brahmana from the first millennium BCE, king *Vaivasvata* is the seventh of the fourteen *Manus* (Manu or 'Man'), and the progenitor of humanity during the time cycle (or *kalpa*) before the great flood. *Brahmā*, the creator god, created Manu as a progenitor and ruler of the human race, the first man, made in his own

image for the task of protecting the earth and people. There are fourteen *Manus* each belonging to a great age of a *Manu* known as *Manvantara*.

The Hindu flood story is of *Matsya*, the fish, as one of the twelve *avatārs* of the god *Vishnu*, and King *Manu*. *Matsya* returns King *Manu*'s favor for saving his life by warning him of a great flood that will be preceded by a drought, a famine, and a fire that turns the entire earth to ashes, followed by rain and a flood that turns the earth into a vast ocean. *Matsya* also advises him to build a giant boat. *Manu* is instructed to take the seeds of life from all living creatures and take them, and only them, to the boat with him, along with a group of gods, sages, the books of knowledge, such as the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*, all of which will survive and continue their existence on earth. As predicted, the floods come. *Manu* ties the ship's rope to *Matsya*'s horn to be pulled to safety, resting the ship on the northern mountains of the *Himalayas* (Dimmitt 1978:55-74).

The story of building a ship is retold in the *Puranas*, and in the great epic of *Mahābhārata*, where an ark is constructed by *Viśvakarman* according to certain measurements, and moves according to *Yama*'s will. In Book 2, section 8.1-5, *Narada* says:

Listen, *Yudhiṣṭhira*, I will tell you about the divine hall which *Viśvakarman* made for the sake of *Yama*, *Viśvasvat*'s son. This hall is splendid, O King, being a hundred spans in length and width, or even more, O *Paṇḍava*. Sparkling, bright as the sun, moving at pleasure in every direction. It is not excessively cold, nor excessively hot, but gladdening in spirit; There is no pain nor old age there, no hunger, thirst, nor anything disagreeable; There is no misery or fatigue, nor any perversity. All desires are fulfilled there, those which are divine and those which are human. The food and drink are flavorful and abundant, O Tamer of foes! (Lincoln 1989:28-29)

#### Zoroastrian Yima

In the Zoroastrian tradition, *Yama*/*Yima* perseveres and develops in a number of ways. Chiefly, as the first king and founder of civilization, *Yima* is recorded as both the spiritual and material leader and educator of all people on Earth. He is referred to as the descendant of the first man, or *GaiiōMarətan*, or 'Mortal Life,' (Avestan *Gaya Məretān*, Middle Persian *Gayōmard*, New Persian *Kayūmars*), and often the name *Marətan* is compared to the similar story of *Mārtāṇḍa* 'Mortal seeds,' the stillborn Vedic solar deity of the Indo-Iranian origin. In the creation story, as told in the book of *Bundahishn*, when *Gaya Məretan* died, many different things were created from his body, among which is his seed, buried in the earth, that produced the first man, *Mashyā*, and the first woman, *Mashyānē*. The pair produced several pairs of children from whom all the races were born. There are several variations of the first man and woman stories, and the first king ruling over humanity. The story of *Yima* and his sister *Yimak* is the most prominent one. As the children of *Vivanhvant*, they are the fifth descendants of the first man, *Gaya Məretan*.

#### Yima is the primordial man *Gaya Məretan*:

We worship the *Fravashi* of *Gaya Məretan* [*Gayomard*], who first listened unto the thought and teaching of *Ahura Mazda*; of whom *Ahura* formed the race of the *Aryan* nations, the seed of the *Aryan*

nations. We worship the piety and the Fravashi of the holy Zarathushtra (Yasht 13.87).

Yima's birth is described as an award to his father who made the first Haoma sacrifice to Ahura Mazda:

Thereupon did Haoma answer me, he the holy one, and driving death afar: Vivanhvant was the first of men who prepared me for the incarnate world. This award was offered him; this gain did he acquire, that to him was born a son who was Yima, called the brilliant, (he of the many flocks, the most glorious of those yet born, the sunlike-one of men), that he made from his authority both herds and people free from dying, both plants and waters free from drought, and men could eat inexhaustible food.

In the reign of brave Yima was there neither cold nor heat, there was neither age nor death, nor envy demon-made. Like teenagers walked the two forth, son and father, in their stature and their form, so long as Yima, son of Vivanhvant ruled, he of the many herds (Yasna 9.4-5).

Yimais the king of the Golden Age during the first age of the creation. He ruled over all creation, including the demons (Daevas) from whom he learned numerous skills:

We sacrifice unto the awful kingly Glory, made by Mazda....

That clave unto the bright Yima, the good shepherd, for a long time, while he ruled over the seven Karshvares of the earth, over the Daevas and men, the Yatus and Pairikas, the oppressors, the blind, and the deaf;

He who took from the Daevas both riches and welfare, both fatness and flocks, both weal and Glory;

In whose reign both aliments were never failing for feeding creatures, flocks and men were undying, waters and plants were undying (Yasht 19.30-32).

Yima is the illumination of knowledge:

And whosoever of you, O men,— thus said Ahura Mazda,— thus said Ahura Mazda, — ‘O holy Zarathushtra! shall seize that Glory that cannot be forcibly seized, he has the gifts of an Āthravan; whosoever shall long for the illumination of knowledge, he has the gifts of an Āthravan; whosoever shall long for fullness of knowledge, he has the gifts of an Āthravan;

‘And Riches will cleave unto him, giving him full welfare, holding a shield before him, powerful, rich of cattle and garments; and Victory will cleave unto him, day after day; and likewise Strength, that smites more than a year. Attended by that Victory, he will conquer the havocking hordes; attended by that Victory, he will conquer all those who hate him.’

For its brightness and glory, I will offer it a sacrifice (Yasht 19.53-54).

In Younger Avesta, at the beginning of creation, Yimais the king of the Golden Age of Iranians (Middle Persian Jamšēd, New Persian Jamšīd [Jamsheed]). He ruled for one thousand years, and provided peace and prosperity for all, creating a kind

of heaven on earth. Additionally, in the National Epic of the Greater Iran, the Book of the Kings (Shāhnāme, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> CE), it is said that King Yima-Jamshīd defeats the Daēvas (demons), takes their goods, and learns art and numerous skills from them. Because demons have the ability to fly, the king builds a chariot for the flying demons to take him into the sky. This occasion marks the origin of the annual Persian New Year festival, NoRooz, or ‘New Day’ that is still celebrated on the first day of the spring equinox (Dumézil 1973:68; Zaehner 1961:134-39).

Eventually, Yima falls from grace; he commits sinful acts, and is dethroned, although the nature of the sins is not clear. The Old Avesta attests that Zarathushtra rejected Yima because, during the first sacrifice, he taught men to eat meat by giving them portions of ox flesh. In addition, Yima was rejected because he committed the sin of presumption, claiming godlike qualities. In Yasna 32.8, Zoroaster utters, ‘Even Yima, the son of Vivanhvant, became notorious for such crimes. He, wishing to gratify the mortals, our people, failed by calling himself God.’ Claiming godlike qualities resulted in his losing paradise, and his divine glory, and holy fortune, or Avestan xwarrah (Middle Persian xwarrah), on three consecutive occasions (Humbach 1991:133; Puhvel 1989:108-110). In the Avestan texts, Yima survives the flood and lives on; however, in the Book of the Kings, Yima's kingship, his contributions, as well as his death because of his arrogance and faults, are retold.

In whose reign there was neither cold wind nor hot wind, neither old age nor death, nor envy made by the Daevas, in the times before his lie, before he began to have delight in words of falsehood and untruth.

But when he began to find delight in words of falsehood and untruth, the Glory was seen to flee away from him in the shape of a bird. When his Glory had disappeared, then the great Yima Khshaeta, the good shepherd, trembled and was in sorrow before his foes; he was confounded, and laid him down on the ground (Yasht 19.33-34).

Despite this, Yimais esteemed as the protector and savior in the scriptures, and in traditional stories remains the great hero-king, the ‘most glorious of mortals’ who provided security, social order, and happiness for all. He is credited with numerous inventions, such the tools used for mining precious stones and metals, making weapons, constructing bricks, weaving wool and silk, harvesting medicinal plants, and creating perfume and wine. As the annual New Year celebration suggests, he remains an important figure deserving of high adoration – to the extent that people reference the great Achaemenid palace, the Persepolis (in province of Fars, Iran), as Takht-e Jamsheed, the ‘Throne of Jamshid’ (Yima's name in New Persian).

The story of the nine-hundred year rule of Yima and the flood, like Noah of the Zoroastrian tradition, is preserved in the Vendīdād or Vidēvdād (chapter II), a collection of texts conserved in the Zend-Avesta, linguistically dating well before the first millennium BCE. The Vendīdād consists of twenty-two parts, containing discussion fragments between Ahura Mazda and his chosen priest-prophet, Zarathushtra.

Vendīdād's first chapter is a creation myth, followed by the second chapter's recounting of the legend of Yima, which describes a destructive winter followed by a flood of melting ice

comparable to the great floods described in other mythological traditions. In the text, Yima is referenced as a solar deity, orxšaēta (khshaeta, or 'brilliant'), an epithet of the sun (hwarekhshaeta, or khurshid in New Persian), hence YimaKhshaeta, or Yima the Brilliant. Yima's significance is underscored by the act of God Ahura Mazda giving his law to him, and rejecting the god's offer (Vidēvdād 7.4):

Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: Ahura Mazda, Most Holy Spirit, Creator of the material world, just! To which man did you first speak, Ahura Mazda, other than to me, Zarathushtra? To whom did you first teach the Ahuric, Zarathushtrian religion? Then said Ahura Mazda: To fair Yima, possessed of good herd, O just Zarathushtra.... To him I taught the Ahuric, Zarathushtrian religion. Then to him I said...: Fair Yima, son of Vivanhvant, make ready to recite and propagate my religion! Then fair Yima answered me, O Zarathushtra: I was not born nor taught to remember and propagate the religion. Then to him I said, O Zarathushtra, I who am Ahura Mazda: If, Yima, you are not ready to recite and propagate my religion, then increase my world, then enlarge my world. Then shall you make ready to be protector and guardian and watcher over my world.

As the first man and the first king, Yima is the ruler of the end of the world. The world of the twelve millennia, as described in Zoroastrian texts, was to end in a catastrophic winter, with floods of melted snow, followed by a heavenly immortal existence on Earth for those who received protection the Vara 'enclosure' (Vendīdād, chapter II) Yima is building. Interestingly, the legend of Varadates back to Indo-Iranian times in western Iran under the Medes, and is most likely influenced by the Mesopotamian flood stories (Boyce 1984:94).

Ahura Mazda, with all divine beings (Yazatas), meets with Yima, and all excellent human beings, at the center of the world, Avestan Airyanəm Vaējō, i.e., 'the homeland of Aryans,' to express their disappointment over the earth's overpopulation, and to warn Yima of the coming of disastrous winters, and to urge him to build a three-level Vara. Ahura Mazda also provides the exact instructions as to how the enclosure should be constructed. He commands Yima to collect the greatest seeds of two of every kind of human and animal, and to protect them inside the enclosure for future repopulation, just as in the Mesopotamian and biblical flood stories. Additionally, in the Zoroastrian version, every forty years a pair of twins, one male and one female, is born, and they live the happiest of lives (Lincoln 1986:37-39). Vara is similar to the Vedic heaven Vala, and is described as being bright, free of sickness and death, with neither cold nor heat, and neither old age nor death. Before the flood, Yima extends the earth three times, an act reminiscent of the Vedic myth of Viṣṇu's three steps, also in response to the overpopulation of the planet.

Yima's kingdom in the ark is similar to Vedic heaven, and is also described as being bright, and free from sickness and death: 'In the reign of valiant Yima, neither cold nor heat was present, neither age nor death was present, neither envy, demon-founded.' The enclosure may represent a similar realm to that of heaven, reserved only for the best of creation (Boyce 1975:294-330; Carnoy 1916: 304).

The great flood stories of the Near East discovered thus far share a general pattern that begins with the god's or gods' disappointment in humanity because of mankind's mistakes,

and follows with a verdict to destroy all living beings, after which creation starts anew. In the stories, a hero is chosen, and is warned about a destructive flood as a result of a rainstorm or melting snow, and told that the flood will last for a certain number of days. The hero is ordered to build a vehicle, a quadrilateral enclosure, in which he is told to board himself, his family, and the best of living beings. God also provides the construction's design, as well as its measurements and the specifics regarding its compartments, doors, windows, lighting, water systems, and more. The story ends with a new genesis, the repopulation of the earth, and the continuation of life.

The comparisons of the ancient Indian and Iranian flood stories, both deeply rooted in the Indo-Iranian period, testify to the existence of a much earlier myth that, as the result of coming in contact with Mesopotamia, perhaps later influenced (and was influenced by) its neighboring cultures. A brief review of relevant verses illustrates this point:

Vendīdād (II.1-43)

- (1) Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda: 'Ahura Mazda, Most Holy Spirit, Creator of the material world, just! To which man did you first speak, Ahura Mazda, other than to me, Zarathushtra? To whom did you first teach the Ahuric, Zarathushtrian religion?'
- (2) Then said Ahura Mazda: 'To fair Yima, possessed of good herd, O just Zarathushtra...: To him I taught the Ahuric, Zarathushtrian religion'
- (3) Then to him I said... 'Fair Yima, son of Vivanhvant, make ready to recite and propagate my religion!' The fair Yima answered me, O Zarathushtra: 'I was not born nor taught to remember and propagate the religion'
- (4) Then to him I said, 'O Zarathushtra, I who am Ahura Mazda: If, Yima, you are not ready to recite and propagate my religion, then increase my world, then enlarge my world. Then shall you make ready to be protector and guardian and watcher over my world.'....
- (6-8). Then, I, Ahura Mazda, gave him two tools, a golden goad and a golden-adorned whip.... Then three hundred winters passed under Yima's rule. Then this earth became full for him of flocks and herds and men and dogs and birds and red burning fires. And the flocks and herds and men found no place upon it
- (9). Then I proclaimed to Yima: 'Fair Yima, son of Vivanhvant! Full is the earth, with the thronging of flocks and herds and men... And the flocks and herds and men find no place (any more) upon it'
- (10). Then Yima went forth, to the light, to the south, along the path of the sun. He drove this earth on with the golden goad, he struck it with the whip, saying: 'Beloved Spenta Armaiti! Go forth and stretch yourself for the bearing of flocks and herds and men'
- (11). The Yima extended this earth by one-third more than it was before. Here the flocks and herds and men made a home for themselves, according to their wish and desire...
- (12-17). Then six hundred winters passed under Yima's rule. Then this earth became full for him.... The Yima extended this earth by two thirds.... Then nine hundred winters passed under Yima's rule. Then this earth became full for him...

- (18-19). Then Yima extended this earth by three-thirds. Here the flocks and herds and men made a home for themselves, according to their wish and desire...
- (20-22). The Creator held an assembly together with the invisible yazatas, He, Ahura Mazda, being renowned.... Then said Ahura Mazda to Yima: 'Fair Yima, son of Vivanhvant! Bad winters will come to the material world, therewith one harsh destructive winter. Bad winters will come to the material world, therewith the cloud will snow abundantly with snow, from the highest mountain to the depths of the Aredvi
- (24). Before that winter the land will have well cared for pasture. Water in abundance will carry this away. Then after the melting of the snow, O Yima, it will be a marvel for the material world if here is seen the footprint of a sheep
- (25). Then make that 'var': with each of its four sides a stadium-length. At the same time fetch seed of small cattle and large cattle and men and dogs and red burning fires. Then make that 'var,' a stadium long on each of its four sides, to be a dwelling place for men ... an abiding place for cattle
- (30). ... Fetch into the highest section (of the 'var') the seed of a thousand men and women, into the middle one six hundred, into the lowest one three hundred. Go over the 'var' with the golden goad, touch the 'var' lightly. For light put in a door a window ...
- (31). Then Yima thought, How shall I make the 'var' of which Ahura Mazda has spoken to me? Then Ahura Mazda said to Yima: 'Fair Yima, son of Vivanhvant! Trample this earth asunder with your heels, thrust it apart with your hands...
- (39). 'Creator of the material world, just! Which will be these luminaries, O just Ahura Mazda said: 'Self-governing luminaries, not everlasting. Once (in a year) they are seen setting and rising – stars and moon and sun
- (41). And those (in the 'var') regard a year as a day. After every forty years each human pair will give birth to twins, a female and a male; and so with the animal species. And those men lead the best of lives in the 'var' which Yima made
- (42). 'Creator of the material world, just! Who shall there propagate the Mazda-worshipping religion, in this 'var' which Yima has made? Then said Ahura Mazda: 'The raven, O Spitama Zarathushtra'
- (43). 'Creator of the material world, just! Who is the lord and judge of its inhabitants?' Then said Ahura Mazda: 'Urvatatnara, O Zarathushtra' (Boyce 1984: 94-96).
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