



BAHMAN II. IN THE PAHLAVI TEXTS

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In the Zoroastrian tradition Bahman is the first of the Aməša Spəntas and the protector of cattle. In the Pahlavi writings, with their strong dualist perspective, he has the arch-demon Akōman as his adversary. Both in the Younger Avesta and in the Pahlavi literature he acts as Ohrmazd's auxiliary in the work of creation.

Bahman, as his name indicates, has two essential qualities, goodness (*wehīh*) and thought (*menišn*). He therefore, according to the exegesis of the *Dādestān ī denīg* (2.15-16), differs from Srōš, who exists in speech (*gōwišn*), and from Ard (Aša), who exists in action (*kunišn*); but according to another tradition, Bahman dwells in the intelligence (*axw*), Srōš in thought (*menišn*), and Spandarmad in the spirit (*vārom*); *Dēnkard*, p. 49.16). Although Bahman remains the protector of cattle and the embodiment of their five species (*Zātspram* 23.2), the literature lays much greater stress on his relationship to mankind. He plays an important part in mankind's destiny, both here below and in the beyond. In the present world, he does thrice-daily counts of the good and bad thoughts, words, and deeds of every human being (*Dādestān ī denīg* 13.2-3); but he is not the sole account-keeper (*āmārgar*), as Mihr, Srōš, and Rašn are also charged with the task, particularly at the final judgment of each individual. Bahman acts as the guide of souls, but the *Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag* (chap. 11.163)



explains that he only intervenes at the last stage of the soul's journey, by accompanying it to the abode of Ohrmazd where he himself resides. Finally it is stated that during the Renewal at the end of time, Bahman will be consulted about everything (Dēnkard, p. 824. 12-13).

The Pahlavi texts contain legendary accounts describing Bahman's involvement with Zoroaster's birth (see the texts in Mole, *La légende*). Zoroaster was laughing when he was born because Bahman was dwelling in him (*Dēnkard*, bk. 5.2.5), Bahman being the *mēnōg* who brings happiness (*Zātspram* 8.15). Bahman's opposition to Akōman is illustrated with examples from Zoroaster's tribulations in infancy; it is Bahman who, accompanied by Srōš, brings a ewe to Zoroaster to nourish him (*Zātspram* 10.11; *Dēnkard*, bk. 7.3.17). Since Bahman is so close to Ohrmazd, it is not surprising that he played a part in the plan to create Zoroaster, being required to carry the sacred *hōm* from which Zoroaster's body was made (*Dēnkard*, bk. 7.2.17-25), or that he escorted Zoroaster to his interviews with Ohrmazd. Similarly he appears as a messenger sent to Vištāsp to dispel his doubts and as a guide (*parwānag*) summoned by Tištar to make rain fall (*Zātspram* 3.8).

No Avestan *yašt* is specifically dedicated to Bahman. The frequently expressed opinion that the substance of a lost *Bahman yašt* has been preserved in the Pahlavi book *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* does not rest on any solid foundation. The *yašts* dedicated to the Aməša Spəntas are not old (see Boyce, *Textual Sources*, p. 91) but are all late fabrications, as Darmesteter first noted. Internal analysis of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* reveals no resemblance in either substance or form to the ancient *yašts*. The arguments from the language put forward by G. Widengren and other Swedish scholars are weak and unconvincing. Even the title of *Bahman yašt* was invented by modern scholars (see A. Hultgård, in Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism*, p. 388), but Bahman does not enter into the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* at all. In reality the book is a late compilation of myths and apocalyptic speculations.

Bahman's name does not often appear in onomastics, being much less widely used than Mithra or Ādur as a component of personal names. This is surprising for a divine being so closely concerned with mankind.

See also [aməša spənta](#); [apocalyptic](#).



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