



## GĀH

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**GĀH**, a Middle Persian, Parthian, and New Persian word meaning either “place” or “time.”

i. *Place.*

ii. *Time.*

### i. PLACE

In the sense of place, the word derives from Indo-Iranian \*gā-, IE. \*gwā- (go; *Air Wb.*, col. 517; Mayrhofer, *Wörterbuch* I, p. 432). The attested Old Iranian forms are Av. *gātu*, *gāθu-* (on the irregular correspondence of *t* and *θ* see Bartholomae, pp. 7-8; Mayrhofer, p. 162; de Blois, p. 61). OAv. *gātu-* (*Yasna* 28.5) and the cognate Vedic *gātu-* have been translated as “going, motion; way” (Niesser, pp. 90-91; de Blois, p. 61 and n. 7); but in Younger Avesta the word’s common meaning is “place,” sometimes particularized as “proper/appointed place,” or “place for sitting or lying, couch” (*Air Wb.*, cols. 517-19). In *Yašt* 17.9 the couches are “with gold-clamped feet” (*zaraniiapaxšta.pāδāṅhō*), and probably at that period the *gātu-* “made of gold” (*zaraniiō.kərəta-*) assigned to the gods (*Vd.* 19.31, 32) were likewise thought of as couches. “Place” is also the common meaning of OP *gāθu-*, with the specific sense attested of “place for standing, platform,” and with that of



“throne” indicated by the Babylonian and possibly Elamite translations (de Blois, pp. 61-62, 63-64). The Achaemenid sculptures show that by this an elevated seat was meant.

*Gāh* in Middle Persian and Parthian, and occurring frequently as a loan-word in Armenian (Hübschmann, *Armenische Grammatik*, p. 125), has all these meanings and also that of “rank,” plainly from one’s place in an assembly. The Manichean Middle Persian and Parthian *gāh* is used to render Greek *bēma* in the sense of “platform” (de Blois, p. 62); the Zoroastrians used an extended form, *gāhug* (<\*gāuka-), for “couch of the dead, bier” (cf. their standard usage, attested only in Islamic times, of *gā/āhān*, <\*gāh-āhan, “iron couch, bier”; *EIr.* VI, p. 283). In New Persian *gāh* has the sense of “place” only as the final element in compounds. As an independent word it usually means “seat, couch, throne,” while Arabicized *jāh* has the sense of “rank, office, dignity.”

See also [CORPSE](#); [BĒMA](#).

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ii. TIME

In Zoroastrian priestly usage, *gāh* (< Av. *gāθā-*, a Mid. Pers., Parth., and NPers. word whose common meaning is “time”) retains the various YAv. applications of that word: for one of Zoroaster’s hymns, for one of the five groups of those hymns, and for those hymns with the other OAv. texts collectively (*Air Wb.*, cols.519-21; Dhabhar, pp. 135-36). It also renders Av. *afsman-* “line of (Gathic) verse” (*Air Wb.*, col. 103). In addition it is used generally by Zoroastrians for each of the five divisions or “times” of the twenty-four hour day, for which no Avestan term is recorded. It is agreed that it is through this usage that the word acquired the meaning “time,” but why the word *gāθā-* should have been applied to the day-divisions is not certain. It is, however, likely (Boyce, pp. 84-85) that before Zoroaster the Iranians divided the daylight hours into three periods, marked by prayers at sunrise, noon, and sunset, with the night devotionally a blank, whereas Zoroaster required his followers to pray also at midnight and dawn, thus creating two additional “times.” The obligatory prayers to be said at each “time” are the same, and have at their core, and presumably originally consisted of, verses from the Gathas (Y. 46.7 and part of Y. 44.16). Further, priests teaching the new usage may, as a reminder to pray five times, have drawn an analogy with the prophet’s fivefold *gāθāgāθā* times,” shortened simply to “*gāθās.*” Since this was a matter which concerned everyone in daily life, this use of *gāθā-* would readily have passed into the general language, yielding in due course a variety of idioms and compounds with *gāh*, e.g., Pers. *pagāh* (early morning, early; Hübschmann, p. 42, no. 324), *bīgāh* (evening, late; untimely), *gāh be-gāh* (sometimes), etc. *Gāh* also occurs occasionally in Pahlavi for one of the six *Gāhānbārs* (q.v.).

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