



MIHR YAŠT

MIHR YAŠT, Middle Persian form of the name of the tenth of the 21 *Yašts* of the Avesta. It constituted the seventh Fargard of the Avestan *Bagān Yašt* Nask, of which a Pahlavi summary survives in the *Dēnkard* (see [BAGĀN YAŠT](#)). The *Mihr Yašt* is the hymn of the sixteenth day of the 30-day month of the Zoroastrian calendar (see [SĪH-RŌZAG](#); Choksy and Kotwal, 2005, pp. 234-35). Dedicated to Miθra, a major Zoroastrian deity (see [MITHRA](#)), it belongs to the hymnic group of *Yašts* and is one of the longest and most important hymns of the Avesta.

Content. The *Mihr Yašt* is structured in 35 sections or *Karde*, which comprise 146 stanzas in total. With the exception of the first, each *Karde* is introduced with a formula that praises the god's chief characteristics (Kellens, 2000, pp. 688-90). Miθra's exclusive epithet is "of extensive grazing" (*vouru.gaoiiaoiti-*), and he is praised for possessing verbal skills (*arš.vacaŋhəm viiāxanəm*), sharp senses (*hazaŋra.gaošəm, baēuuarə.cašmanəm*) and a broad outlook (*pərəθu.vaēδaiianəm*). He never sleeps and is always awake (*ax^vafnəm jayāuruuāŋhəm*), is well-built, lofty, and strong (*hutāštəm, bərəzaŋtəm, sūrəm*). The concluding refrain, which manuscripts F1 and E1 incorporate in full in stanzas 4-6 but abbreviate at the end of the other *Kardes*, starts, as in other *Yašts*, with "on account of his wealth and glory" (*ahe raiia x^varənaŋhaca*) and ends with the [Yeŋhe hātəm](#) prayer.

Framed by these introductory and concluding verses, the contents of the body of the 35 *Kardes* are as follows:



Karde 1, stanzas 1-6: (1) [Ahura Mazdā](#) requests that Mithra be worshipped and prayed to as much as he, Ahura Mazdā, himself (2) and instructs Zarathushtra never to break a contract, be it made with a truthful or a deceitful person. (3) Mithra will reward those who keep a contract. (4-6) Concluding refrain.

2, 7-9: (7) Introductory refrain. (8) The leaders of the countries worship Mithra as they go into battle against blood-thirsty enemies. (9) The god will favor whichever of the two warring countries worships him first.

3, 10-11: The warriors worship Mithra on their [chariots](#) requesting swift horses, good health for themselves and instant victory over their enemies.

4, 12-16: (13) Mithra rises at dawn and oversees all Aryan countries, (14) their mountains rich with pastures and water, their lakes and navigable rivers which rush towards Iškata, Pouruta, Mouru, Haraiva, Sogdian Gava and [Chorasmia](#). (15) He surveys the seven climes (see [HAFT KEŠVAR](#)) (16) and visits them bestowing glory (*x^varənah-*; see [FARR\[AH\]](#)), rule and victory (*vərəθraynəm*).

5, 17-21: (17) No head (*pati-*) of a house (*nmāna-*), clan (*vis-*), tribe (*zañtu-*), or country (*dahiiu-*; see [DAHYU](#)) can deceive Mithra. (18-19) If anyone attempts to do so, then Mithra, enraged and provoked (*grañtō upa.t̥bištō*), will come from an unexpected direction and smash them together with their respective house, clan, tribe, or country. (20) Those who break a contract will have unruly horses (21) and ineffective weapons.

6, 22-24: (22) By contrast, Mithra liberates from anxiety and danger those who respect him. (23) May we not treat you, O Mithra, with falsehood! Free us from anxiety and danger! (= 63) When enraged you take away the strength of arms and feet of those who break a contract. You make them blind and deaf. (24 = 63) Their spears and arrows are ineffective against any who are helped by Mithra.

7, 25-27: (25) Praises of Mithra, (26-27) who smashes the heads of Daevas (see [DAIVA](#)), brings down countries which are defiant, but, when undeceived, leads them to great power.

8, 28-34: (28) Mithra gives stability and prosperity to the houses which gratify him, but brings down those which do not. (29) O Mithra, you can be both harmful and beneficial (*akō vahištasca*) for lands and peoples. (30) For those whose worship of you entails your name being uttered (*aoxtō.nāmana yasna*)



you make their houses splendid and comfortable. (31 = end of 56) I worship you, strong, strongest, undeceived Mithra, with worship in which your name is uttered and with libations. (32 = 57) Listen to our worship, condescend to our worship, accept our offerings and deposit them in the House of Welcome (*garō.nmāne*; see [GARŌDMĀN](#))! (33 = 58) Grant us the favors (*āiiapta-*) for which we ask, (34 = 58) so that we may be in high spirits and defeat all enemies!

9, 35-43: Mithra collects debts and levies armies, (36) involves himself in battles and smashes regiments. (37) He terrorizes and frightens those who break a contract and smashes their heads. (38) The blood-stained settlements of the deceitful and violent contract-breakers are despoiled. Driven on the bloody path towards captivity, their [cattle](#) stand there shedding tears, slavering at the mouth. (39) Since the deceitful ones have not welcomed Mithra, their arrows, spears and slingshots, although well aimed, cause no hurt (40) as neither do their knives and maces. (41) Mithra, not having been gratified, frightens them, as they abandon their battle-lines, by driving them hither, [Rašnu](#) by driving them thither, and [Sraoša](#) by blowing them in all directions towards the protective Yazatas. (42) Then the defeated regiments call out: “O Mithra, our swift horses are taking us to you!” (43) Mithra, however, knocks them down and kills them in their thousands and ten thousands, for he, having been provoked, is enraged.

10, 44-46: (44) Mithra’s shining abode is firmly established in material existence (*astuuanti aṅhūuō*). Unrestricted in size, it extends as far as the earth. (45) His spies sit on all peaks and watchposts (*vaēḍaiianā-*) and not only seek out those who break a contract but also protect the paths of those whom the contract-breakers attack. (46) Mithra, the circumspect spy (*spaš vīḍaēta*), shields his protégés from above, behind and before and comes to help them with foreknowing thought.

11, 47-48: (47) Mithra’s broad-hoofed horses take the enraged god (= 8) against the blood-thirsty enemies. (48) Mithra punishes those who treat him badly by fettering their hands, blinding their eyes and deafening their ears.

12, 49-52: (50-51) Mithra’s abode above the mountain Harā was built by Ahura Mazdā and the Aməša Spəntas. From there he watches all physical life (*ahūm astuuantəm*). (52) As soon as an evildoer emerges, Mithra yokes his swift chariot, as do Sraoša and Nairyō.sangha, and he slays the miscreant.



13, 53-59: (53 = 73) With outstretched hands Mithra complains to Ahura Mazda: (54) “Although I am the protector of all creatures, mortals do not worship me with a worship in which my name is uttered (*aoxtō.nāmana yasna*) in the way that other deities (*aniie yazatāṅhō*) are worshipped. (55 = 74) If mortals worshipped me with a worship in which my name is uttered as they worship other deities, then I would visit the truthful ones for a limited time.” (56) The truthful one (*ašauua*; see [AŠAVAN](#)), offering libations, does worship you (i.e., Mithra) with worship in which your name is uttered. (= 31) I shall worship you, O Mithra, in the same way. (57 = 32) Listen to our worship, condescend to it, accept our offerings and deposit them in the House of Welcome! (58 = 33) Grant us the favors (*āiiapta-*) for which we ask, (58 = 34) so that we may be in high spirits and defeat all enemies!

14, 60: Praise of Mithra.

15, 61-63: (61) Mithra allows plants to grow and rain to fall. (62) He prevents those who break a contract from being prosperous. (63 = 23-24) When enraged you (Mithra) take away the strength of arms and feet of those who break a contract. You make them blind and deaf. (= 24) Their spears and arrows are ineffective against any who are helped by Mithra.

16, 64-66: (64) In Mithra’s soul (*viiane*) there is a great, powerful pledge to the beautiful, far-reaching Religion (*daēnā*), according to which (pledge) the Religion’s influence (*ciθrām*) is spread (*vīdātām*) over all seven regions (*karšuuar-*). (65) Mithra is fast among the fast, loyal among the loyal, strong among the strong. He bestows power, sons, life, comfortable existence and truthfulness. (66) He is accompanied by good Reward (*aši-*), Bounty, Manly Defense, the strong Kavyan Glory (see [KAYĀNIĀN xii](#)), the strong Firmament, the strong Likeness of the Creator, the strong Choices (*frauuāšaiiō*; see [FRAVAŠI](#)) of the truthful people and by the community of many truthful Mazda-worshippers.

17, 67-69: (67) Mithra travels in a large-wheeled chariot built by the spirit (*mainiiu-*). He comes from the Arəzahī region and approaches the splendid Xvaniraθa one. (68) Good Reward (*aši-*) is his charioteer and the Mazdayasnian Religion (*daēnā*) prepares his path for comfortable travel. His chariot is drawn by horses, which are spiritual (*mainiiuu-*), white, radiant, conspicuous, life-giving (*spənta*), knowing, shadeless, and swift. All spiritual (*mainiiuu-*) Daevas and deceitful people tremble. (69) May we here indeed not encounter the accusation of the wrathful lord (*ahura-*)!



18, 70-72: (70) Vərəθrayna (see FERĒDUN) travels in front of Mithra in the shape of a ferocious wild male boar, one that has sharp tusks, kills with one blow, is unapproachable, grim, speckle-faced, strong, and has feet, tendons, tail, and temples made of metal. (71) Accompanied by Manly Defense (*nairiia hqm.varəta*), it attacks its opponents, knocking them down with a toss while barely noticing that he has slain them. (72) The boar cuts the contract-breakers to pieces and mingles their bones, hair, brains, and blood with the earth.

19, 73-78: (73 beginning, = 53) With outstretched hands Mithra used to raise his voice in the following way: “O Ahura Mazdā, most life-giving force, creator of the material world, truthful one, (74 = 55) if mortals worshipped me with a worship in which my name is uttered (*aoxtō.nāmana yasna*) as they worship other deities (*aniie yazatānhō*), then I would visit the truthful ones for a limited time.” (75) May we become protectors of our homesteads and not lose them, our houses, clan, tribe or country! (76) Mithra, you destroy all our enemies. (77) I appeal to you for help! May he come to help us on account of our good offerings, so that we shall have a safe and comfortable dwelling! (78) You, O Mithra, protect the lands in proportion as they observe your cult, but you destroy those that are defiant. I appeal to you for help!

20, 79-80: (79 = 81) Mithra dispenses justice (*rašnu-*) (80) and protects the homes of those who reject falsehood. With you as my lord (*paiti*), I establish the best fellowship (*haxədrəm*) and victory (*vərəθraynəm*), while the contract-breakers lie defeated, slain as they lose their balance (*vīθiši*).

21, 81-82: (81 = 79) Mithra provides justice (*rašnu-*). (82) Ahura Mazdā equipped Mithra with sharp eyes so that he cannot be deceived.

22, 83-87: (83) With outstretched hands, the head (*paiti-*) of the country (*dahiiu-*) calls Mithra for help, as does the head of the tribe (*zañtu-*), (84) clan (*vis-*) and house (*nmāna-*). The cow (?) and the destitute (*driyu-*) do likewise, (85) and their lamentations rise up to the sky and pervade the seven regions. (86) The cow, while being led away captive, calls for Mithra’s assistance with outstretched hands. (87) Mithra comes to help the one who gratifies him, but destroys the house, clan, tribe, country and empire of any who are hostile to him.

23, 88-94: (88) **Haoma** worshipped Mithra on Hukairya, which is the highest peak of lofty Haraitī (see ALBORZ ii). (89) Ahura Mazdā installed him as his own priest and as one of the Life-giving Immortals (*aməša- spənta-*). Haoma’s



voice rises to the sky and pervades the seven regions. (90) He was the first to press the Haoma-plant on lofty Haraitī. He is honored by Ahura Mazdā, the Life-giving Immortals, and the sun of swift horses. (91) Homage to Mithra of extensive grazing! Hail to the man who worships you in the prescribed way! (92, partly = Y. 57.24) Truthful Ahura Mazdā endorsed this religion (*daēnā*; see [DĒN](#)), as did the Life-giving Immortals. Ahura Mazdā gave Mithra the role of judging (*ratuθβəm*) the living beings in the world. (93) In both existences (*ubahu-*) protect us, O Mithra, from death (*mahrka-*) and violence (*aešma-*)! (94) Give strength to our teams and to us!

24, 95-98: (95) After sunset Mithra touches the earth's two edges and surveys everything that is between it and the sky, (96) holding his mace (*vazrəm*; see [GORZ](#)) which sports a hundred bosses and blades. (97) The Destructive Force (*aṅra-mainiiu-*; see [AHRIMAN](#)), Violence, other Daevas and deceitful people tremble with fear. (98 = 135) May enraged Mithra not slay us!

25, 99-101: (99) Daevas and deceitful people tremble as Mithra drives over the right-hand (= southern) edge of the earth (100) accompanied by Sraoša on his right, Rašnu on his left and waters (see [ĀBĀN](#)), plants, and the Fravašis of the truthful ones all around him. (101) On reaching countries where contracts are broken, he slays their horses and men.

26, 102-103: (102) Mithra, the skillful charioteer, (103) whom Ahura Mazdā appointed to guard and supervise the productiveness (*frauuōiš*) of the entire material world.

27, 104-111: (104) Mithra's arms reach out to apprehend anyone who speaks falsely, wherever they may be. (105) He seizes them with both his arms, even as they believe themselves to be unnoticed. (106) But I think in my mind: "No mortal can have as many bad thoughts, words, and deeds as Mithra has good ones. (107) Nor can anyone have a greater mind or better ears and perception than Mithra." Forcefully he comes forth and looks around with a beautiful, dazzling glance: (108) "Who will worship me? Who will deceive me? On whom can I bestow wealth and glory (*x^varənah-*), health, comfortable property, noble offspring (109) and powerful rule? (110) To whom shall I apportion disease and destruction, to whom tawdry poverty? Whose noble offspring shall I slay down with one strike? (111) From which tyrant shall I take away powerful rule?"

28, 112-114: (112) Mithra's [armor](#) is of silver and gold. His routes are bright,

broad, and ideal for grazing when he enters countries in which he is treated well (*hubərətō baraiti*) and goes to his own cattle and men (*huua pasu vīra*). (113) May you come to our assistance, O lofty Mithra and Ahura (*miθra ahura bərəzaṇta*), but the sons of those who offer heavy libations (*hunauuō gouru.zaoθranqm*) will come to nothing! (114) May you, O Mithra of extensive grazing, give strength to our teams, health to ourselves, and watchfulness and ability to strike back at our enemies!

29, 115-118: (115) O Mithra of extensive grazing, Ratu (see [AHU](#)) of the house, clan, tribe, and country, most Zarathushtra-like (*zaraθuštrō.təma*), (116) twentyfold is the contract (*miθrō*) between two friends shouldering mutual responsibilities, thirtyfold between two of the same clan, fortyfold between two of the same house, fiftyfold between husband and wife, sixtyfold between fellow-students, seventyfold between disciple and teacher, eightyfold between son-in-law and father-in-law, ninetyfold between two brothers, (117) hundredfold between father and son, thousandfold between two countries, tenthousandfold is the contract (*miθrō*) of the Mazdayasnian Religion (*daēnā-māzdaiiasni-*), and days of strength (*ama-*) and victory (*vərəθrayna-*) will ensue. (118) As the sun goes forth across the lofty Harā and then returns, so will I (Mithra), O Spitama, approach with homage both the lowly and the lofty gifts, against the will of deceitful Angra Mainyu.

30, 119-122: (119) O Spitama, may you worship Mithra and tell the pupils! The Mazda-worshippers shall worship you (Mithra) with animals both small and large, and with birds and fowls. (120) Mithra is the protector of all truthful Mazdayasnians who worship and propitiate him with libations. (121) Zarathushtra asked: “How, O Ahura Mazdā, shall a truthful man drink the purified libation so that Mithra of extensive grazing, whom he worships, is propitiated rather than antagonized?” (122) Ahura Mazdā answered: “For three days and three nights they should wash their bodies. Let them undergo a penance of thirty lashes with a whip in worship and praise of Mithra. Then they should wash themselves for a further two days and nights and receive twenty lashes in worship and praise of Mithra. No one should drink from these libations unless he masters the *Staota Yesniia* and the *Vīspe Ratauuō!*”

31, 123-135: (123) Ahura Mazdā worshipped Mithra in the bright House of Welcome (*raoxšnāt̄ paiti garō.nmānāt̄*). (124) From the bright House of Welcome, Mithra of wide pasture-grounds issues forth on his beautiful, golden, adorned chariot (*vāša-*). (125) Four race-horses pull his chariot, all of them white and immortal, having been reared on spiritual food (*mainiiuš̄*).



x^varəθa). Their forehooves are shod with gold, their hind hooves with silver. All are harnessed to the yoke, the latter being connected to a solid, well-made shaft by means of a metal hook. (126) On Mithra's right travels most right, most life-giving (*razištō spəništō*) Rašnu, on his left truthful most right Insight (*razištā- cistā-*; see **ČISTĀ**) dressed in white garments, the Likeness of the Mazdayasnian Religion. (127) Behind him comes the strong Likeness of the Creator in the shape of an aggressive wild male boar with sharp fangs and tusks, one that kills with one blow. In front of Mithra goes the blazing Fire (see **ĀTAŠ**), which is the strong Glory (*x^varənō*) of the Kavis. (128) On Mithra's chariot there are a thousand well-made bows, (129) a thousand well-made arrows, (130) a thousand well-made spears, a thousand well-made hatchets, (131) a thousand well-made knives, a thousand well-made metal clubs, all of which are ready to hit the heads of the Daevas, (132) together with his beautiful, easily brandished mace with its hundred bosses and blades, a feller of men as it swings forward. (133) After smiting the Daevas, and slaying the mortals who break a contract, Mithra drives across Arəzahī, Savahī, Fradaḍafšu, Vīdaḍafšu, Vouru.barəšti, Vouru.jarəšti, and that splendid region which is Khvaniratha. (134) As Mithra is proceeding, the Destructive Force (*Angra Mainyu*) trembles, as do Wrath (*Aēšma*), long-handed Procrastination (*Bušyasta*; see **BŪŠĀSP**), and all spiritual Daevas and deceitful ones. (135 = 98) May enraged Mithra not slay us!

32, 136-139: (136) White racehorses pull Mithra's chariot with its one golden wheel as he takes the libations to his abode. (137) Thus spoke Ahura Mazdā: "Hail to the man, O truthful Zarathushtra, on whose behalf a truthful priest (*zaota ašauua*) performs the rites for Mithra, having spread out the sacrificial twigs (*barəsmā-*; see **BARSOM**), and worships by uttering the name of Mithra. Straightaway Mithra visits this man's residence." (138) "Woe to the man", continued Ahura Mazdā, "O truthful Zarathushtra, on whose behalf an untruthful priest (*zaota anašauua*) performs the rites. (139) Neither Ahura Mazdā, nor the other Life-giving Immortals (*aniie aməšāspənta*), nor Mithra of extensive grazing are propitiated by him."

33, 140-141: (140) O Spitama, I shall worship Mithra, the good, strong, spiritual, merciful, mighty charioteer. (141) Being victorious, Mithra is equipped with a well-fashioned weapon, he who watches in darkness, the undeceivable one. He is mighty among the mightiest, strong among the strongest, having by far the greatest insight (*aš.xraθβastəmō*) among the gods (*baγanqm*). Being victorious, he is accompanied by glory. He has a thousand ears, ten thousand eyes, ten



thousand spies, he, the strong, all-knowing, undeceivable one.

34, 142-143: (142) In the morning, Mithra, the well-created, very great god, manifests the many shapes, the creations of the Life-giving Force as he illuminates his body, being endowed with his own light like the moon. (143) Mithra's face blazes like the star *Tištrya*. I will worship Mithra, whose chariot was made by the Life-giving Force.

35, 144-145: (144) We worship Mithra wherever he is in the country. (145) Standing by the sacrificial twigs (*uruuarāhu paiti barəsmāniīāhu*), we worship Mithra and Ahura, the two exalted ones (*miθra.ahura bərazantā*), the stars, the moon, the sun. We worship Mithra who is the head of all countries.

Indo-Iranian origins. Like all texts of the Avesta, the *Mihr Yašt* belongs to an oral culture of ritual poetry whose roots reach back to the prehistoric Indo-Iranian civilization. The god praised in this hymn—*miθra-*, whose Vedic cognate is *mitrá*—is inherited from the Proto-Indo-Iranian culture, in which Mitra emerged as a deity embodying the notion of ‘contract.’ Although in the Rigveda only one hymn (RV 3.59) is dedicated to him alone, he frequently appears coupled with other gods, and especially the deity Varuṇa, with whom his name forms the dvandva compound *mitrávaruṇā* “Mitra and Varuṇa,” a pair of gods praised in several hymns. The Avestan equivalents of the compound are the dvandvas *miθra.ahura* (*Yt.* 10.113, 145) and *ahura.miθra* (*Y.* 1.11, 2.11), with *ahura* replacing *varuṇa-* in the Vedic compound. The earliest attestation of the names Mitra and Varuṇa is an oath formula in a 14th century BCE treaty between the Hittite and Mitanni kings (Kuzmina, 2007, p. 133).

That the geographical horizon of the *Mihr Yašt* is located in Central Asia emerges from the countries listed in *Yt.* 10.14. Moreover, a 6th-century CE painting in the ceiling of the niche of the 38-meter Buddha figure at Bāmiyān [see [BĀMĪĀN ii](#)] (destroyed by the Taliban in 1999), showing a figure traveling in a horse-drawn chariot, has been interpreted as portraying Mithra traversing the sky accompanied by other divine beings, as described in *Yt.* 10.68 and 125 (see [MITHRA ii. ICONOGRAPHY IN IRAN AND CENTRAL ASIA](#)).



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