



## Introduction to “Origins of Human Destiny”

### Review of Previous Article

Despite five successive “falls” over the course of millennia, mankind has persistently pursued its failed attempt to achieve divinity and thus possess the divine language, consciousness and ultimate authority that led the Creator to establish and oversee all Creation. To use the Genesis metaphor, from the beginning mankind has been enthralled by the serpent’s assurance that “ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5).

In ancient times it was only the removal of a primordial god-consciousness and the dawn of self-consciousness, during the time of David, that brought an interruption to mankind’s manic determination to possess God. The First Jewish Temple, erected in the time of Solomon, profoundly signified that the One-and-Only God, YHWH, promised to irrevocably adopt humanity as his own reality. In this act of ultimate compassion and *kenosis* (self-emptying), mankind would not become God. Rather, *God would become human*.

Sadly, the metaphoric meaning of the First Temple and its services was little perceived or acknowledged by God’s Chosen People. Finally, they were conquered by their enemies. The Assyrians dispersed the northern tribes in the eighth century BCE, while the Babylonians exiled the southern tribes in the sixth century BCE. The First Temple was destroyed, its services were terminated, and its metaphoric meaning was lost.

After the defeat of Babylon by the Achaemenid emperor, Cyrus II (539 BCE), the Hebrews were allowed to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple. However, until the reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424 BCE), the restoration was fragile. At this critical time strife was replaced by peace throughout the Middle East — in Greece, Persia and Judah. In this new atmosphere earnest communication and consultation developed, involving Greek scholars, Persian rulers, and Jewish officials in the Persian government.

It was in this environment that intense efforts were made to reverse the fivefold fall of mankind. Greek philosophers devised a fivefold *paideia* (instruction) to ultimately return mankind to the level of divinity. Similarly,

Ezra, Nehemiah and their Jewish colleagues redacted (edited and revised) the Hebrew scriptures so that the Tetrateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers) plus a fifth book (Deuteronomy) became the Pentateuch (*Torah* = instruction, from *yarah* = to teach, to instruct). For the Jews the Pentateuch was the mystical counterpart of the four earthly elements — air, water, earth and fire — plus a fifth and heavenly element — ether. Furthermore, the heavenly, ethereal realm involved three levels — Mosaic Law, angels and throne of God. Thus, the Jews intended for the Pentateuch to provide a fivefold means for the Chosen People to prevail on seven levels altogether (signified by the seventh-day Sabbath), ultimately reaching the divine throne — the level that they contended Moses had already achieved.

## Overview of This Article

With the conclusion of the Peace of Callius (ca. 449 BCE) between Persia and Athens, the Achaemenid Empire became the major crossroad for Greek and Jewish scholars, awed by the majesty and richness of the kingdom and the implications of its Zoroastrian religion. The Achaemenids preserved the contributions of Zarathustra (Greek, “Zoroaster”), who introduced the world’s first morally and ethically based religion at the very time of the Israelite King David (ca. 1000 BCE). Zarathustra was educated as a priest of the ancient Indo-Iranian nature religion. However, beginning at the age of thirty, he had visions in which he was introduced to the Supreme Good God, Ahura Mazda (Lord Wisdom), who, with his Holy Spirit (Spenta Mainyu), had brought forth six Amesha Spentas (archangels) and numerous yazatas (angels). Together, Ahura Mazda and the Spentas created single entities of celestial (*menog* = soul) sky, water, earth, fire, plant, animal and man. Soon thereafter the evil god, Angra Mainyu, brought forth his own *daevas* (demons) to challenge Ahura Mazda and his angels. Fortunately, the initial *menog* Creation was secure from all assault by evil.

Ahura Mazda and the Spentas next transformed the *menog* Creation into a single, terrestrial (*getik*) state that was vulnerable to evil. Angra Mainyu and his minions then attacked and shattered the unique *getik* Creation. Ahura Mazda and his Spentas responded by taking the shattered pieces, grinding them into tiny particles, and scattering them abroad. Soon these particles creatively emerged as innumerable skies, waters, earths, fires, plants, animals and men. Angra Mainyu retaliated with a corresponding counter-creation of evil — storms, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, smoke, dust, blood, poisonous plants, ugly and predatory animals, and evil men.

In his communications with Zarathustra, Ahura Mazda revealed that good thoughts, good words and good deeds would help withstand the attacks of evil. To these must also be added appropriate sacrifices, rituals, liturgies and purification ceremonies. At death the soul of every person would hover over the body for three days and nights. The soul would then leave for the Chinvat Bridge, which crossed the chasm between earth and heaven. At the entrance to

the bridge, the individual judgment of every soul would take place, and the soul's intermediate state until the final judgment would be determined. Meanwhile, the dead body was to be exposed to wild birds and animals and then the bones buried.

At the end of time, a World Savior (Saoyshant) would appear and lead all Creation to victory over evil and to the final judgment. A general resurrection would take place, uniting each body with its soul. A river of molten metal would then flow forth. The good would walk serenely through the river as though it were just warm milk. The evil would be incinerated within three days, and finally Angra Mainyu and his demons would be taken to oblivion in hell.

Zarathustra's visions and subsequent ministry introduced the world to the concept of linear time — past, present and future — to the idea of a cosmic, ethical battle between good and evil, to the supposed intermediate, ethereal state of the soul (*menog*), to a world savior, to death and resurrection, and to judgment and either eternal life in Paradise or oblivion in death. Thus, the Iranian priest and prophet, Zarathustra, was the very first to articulate the concept of human destiny.

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