



American Zoroastrian Society FAQs

Wishing you radiant happiness – Ushtā!

1. What is Zoroastrianism?

Zoroastrianism is the spiritual path taught by Zarathushtra over 3,700 years ago. It encourages individuals to seek truth through wisdom and conscience—not through blind faith or fear. At its heart, it is about living a life guided by righteousness, truth, and radiant happiness.

Zarathushtra called his teachings “Daena Vanguhi” (Good Conscience)—a way of life where each person is responsible for making good choices. His followers later called it Mazdayasna, meaning devotion to Wisdom (Mazda) as the highest goal.

At its core, Mazdayasna teaches that:

- Truth and righteousness (Asha) should guide all decisions.
- We have the freedom to choose our path (Varəna), but choices have consequences that enable our spiritual growth.
- **The purpose of life is to think clearly, act justly, and help improve the world.**

It’s a **universal philosophy**, open to **anyone who wants to live with wisdom, truth, and integrity**.

2. Who is Zarathushtra?

Zarathushtra (also known as Zoroaster) was an ancient philosopher and spiritual teacher who is believed to have lived in Central Asia. He introduced a radically new vision of the Divine—based on wisdom, truth, and moral responsibility—not fear, obedience, or sacrifice.

He taught that each person has the freedom—and the responsibility—to choose between truth and falsehood, and that our choices shape both our character and the world around us. He rejected empty rituals and emphasized inner conscience as the true path to spiritual growth.

His poetic hymns, called the Gathas, form the spiritual heart of Zoroastrianism. They are timeless meditations on justice, wisdom, and the human journey—meant not just to be memorized, but to be reflected upon deeply.



3. What do Zoroastrians believe?

Zoroastrianism is about devotion to wisdom and seeking truth to improve our existence. As we learn and grow, our beliefs may evolve over time. Still, there is a core set of principles in Zarathushtra's teachings that serve as a foundation:

- Ahura Mazda is the Wise Lord and the divine source of all that is good.
- Asha (truth) vs. Druj (falsehood): Our lives are shaped by a moral struggle, and we are called to choose truth and righteousness.
- Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds form the ethical foundation of Zoroastrianism. "Good" means being in alignment with Asha—thinking clearly, speaking truthfully, and acting justly.
- Free Will: Humans are not bound by fate; we are responsible for our own moral choices and the growth that comes from them through the law of cause and effect.
- Zoroastrians believe that through righteous living, the world will ultimately be perfected and reach its ideal state—one where falsehood no longer exists.

4. What is Asha, and why does it matter?

Asha is at the heart of Zarathushtra's teachings—it represents truth, righteousness, and the natural harmony of existence.

Think of Asha as the way things should be when everything is fair, honest, and in balance—like a well-functioning society, a healthy environment, or an honest person doing the right thing.

- In nature, Asha is the order of the universe—the way the sun rises, seasons change, and life flourishes.
- In life, Asha means choosing honesty, kindness, and justice over lies, greed, and harm.
- In thought, Asha means seeking knowledge, questioning anything that doesn't seem ideal, and always looking for truth. For example, questioning outdated beliefs or seeking better solutions in science and ethics is an expression of Asha.

Zarathushtra teaches that **we're not just meant to follow Asha—we should actively cultivate it** through our **good thoughts, good words, and good deeds**.



5. What are the Gathas, and what do they teach?

The Gathas are the hymns of Zarathushtra, composed over 3,700 years ago. They are not rules or rituals, but a deep and thoughtful conversation about life, morality, and the human journey.

1. Ahunavaiti Gatha – Zarathushtra’s vision of an ideal world, where people choose truth over lies and justice over oppression.
2. Ushtavaiti Gatha – The joy of enlightenment (Ushtā) and why seeking truth leads to a meaningful life.
3. Spenta Mainyu Gatha – The importance of progressive thinking and moral responsibility in shaping society.
4. Vohu Khshathra Gatha – What makes a good leader, and how power should serve justice, not greed.
5. Vahishta Ishti Gatha – The idea that our highest reward in life is wisdom, not wealth or status.

The Gathas **challenge us to think for ourselves**, ask big questions, and **take responsibility for making the world better**. They are often called “**thought provokers**” (manthras).

6. Who is Ahura Mazda?

The Divine in Zoroastrianism is known as Ahura Mazda which means Lord Wisdom. Ahura Mazda is the highest wisdom and truth—an enlightened way of being that is entirely beneficial and a force that inspires us to seek knowledge and live righteously. Zarathushtra never describes Ahura Mazda as a ruler or judge presiding over humankind, nor as a deity who demands worship or obedience in exchange for reward or to avoid punishment. The relationship of the Divine to humanity is a wise presence that encourages us to grow, learn, and create a just world.

- The Divine is not an external force that judges, saves, or punishes us, but a loving guide helping us to evolve and realize the Divine within.
 - We must each strive to be Saoshyants (saviors), progressing toward wisdom and righteousness to create an entirely just and beneficial world.
 - Rather than fearing Ahura Mazda, **we are meant to be partners—aligning ourselves with Truth and Wisdom to help create a better existence.**
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7. What are the Amesha Spentas?

The Amesha Spentas are not gods or angels, but divine attributes that represent the qualities needed for an ideal, just, and thriving existence. They are a **framework for realizing the Divine**—ideals that **humans should and can strive to embody for our evolution**:

1. Asha Vahishta (*Ultimate Truth & Righteousness*) – The natural order that governs existence.
2. Vohu Manah (*Good Mind & Moral Awareness*) – The faculty of reason and wisdom that enables moral choice.
3. Spenta Armaiti (*Embodied Truth through Action*) – Commitment to justice and ethical responsibility. It is characterized by benevolence and serenity.
4. Vohu Khshathra (*Just Rule & Social Progress*) – The power of righteous leadership and self-governance.
5. Haurvatat (*Wholeness & Perfection*) – The state of well-being and moral completeness.
6. Ameretat (*Immortality & Everlasting Bliss*) – The realization of eternal wisdom and fulfillment.
7. Spenta Mainyu (*Progressive Way of Being*) – The encapsulation of all of the above, the way of the Divine.

8. What happens after death?

Zarathushtra **does not** teach a **heaven-and-hell system** based on **reward and punishment**. The Gathas don't say much about what exactly happens after death – because ultimately, we do not know! What is clear is that Ahura Mazda doesn't "judge us"; rather **it is our choices – and what we learn from them – that shape our state of being, beginning in this life and continuing in our spiritual evolution**.

- If we live truthfully and seek wisdom, we experience clarity, peace, and joy ("best existence").
- If we live with falsehood and harm others, we experience confusion, regret, and suffering ("worst existence").

The Chinvat Bridge, often misunderstood as a place of judgment, is actually an allegory for our spiritual evolution – crossing from our current state of being with a mix of harmful and beneficial choices to the entirely beneficial state of being that is fully aligned with the Divine.



9. Does Zoroastrianism teach equality for all people, regardless of gender, background, or orientation?

Yes! Zarathushtra's teachings emphasize moral character, wisdom, and righteousness—not birth, gender, or background. The Gathas focus on free will, justice, and equality, making them **naturally compatible with modern human rights and gender equality**.

Key principles in the Gathas that reinforce **universal equality**:

- Varəna (Free Choice) – Every individual has the right and responsibility to choose their own path.
- Asha (Truth & Righteousness) – Ethical actions must be fair and just to all people.
- Spenta Armaiti (Embodied Truth) – Compassion and fairness should be part of every interaction.

Zarathushtra's teachings emphasize the fundamental equality of all people. Regardless of changing times and social norms, Zoroastrian women **had more rights than those in many other cultures of their time—they could own property, lead religious ceremonies, and participate in public life**.

The philosophy also does not condemn people for their identity, but instead asks: 'Are you living truthfully and ethically?' Because Mazdayasna is focused on wisdom, justice, and ethical progress, **it is inherently inclusive and supports equality for all people**.

10. Is Zoroastrianism compatible with modern science, environmentalism, and other global issues?

Absolutely! Zoroastrianism encourages seeking truth, wisdom, and understanding—which **naturally aligns with scientific progress and environmental responsibility**.

1. Science & Reasoning

- The Gathas teach critical thinking and discourage superstition.
- Truth (Asha) includes both moral truth and understanding the natural world.
- Zoroastrian thought supports scientific inquiry as part of seeking wisdom.

2. Environmentalism

- Nature is sacred in Zoroastrian thought—fire, water, air, and earth must be respected and protected.
- The Amesha Spentas include Haurvatat (wholeness, balance), which reflects environmental harmony.
- Ethical responsibility means caring for the planet as a moral duty.

3. Social & Ethical Responsibility

- Spenta Mainyu (Progressive Way of Being) encourages innovation for the betterment of society.
- Righteousness (Asha) means that social systems should be fair and rational.



- Zoroastrianism promotes ethical leadership, good governance, and a just economy.

Thus, Zarathushtra's philosophy **aligns with modern ethical and scientific advancements, reinforcing that seeking wisdom and truth is an ongoing process.**

11. How do I become a Zoroastrian?

Becoming a Zoroastrian is a personal choice—one that each individual must make freely and consciously. You are a Zoroastrian **when you choose to live by the worldview** and core foundation expressed in the Gathas.

If you're interested, we suggest beginning by **reading the Gathas**—the thought-provoking hymns of Zarathushtra—which form the spiritual heart of Zoroastrianism.

The **American Zoroastrian Society** is here to support all new seekers on their journey. We offer educational resources, the option to connect with a mentor for one-on-one learning, and online gatherings where you can explore the teachings more deeply before making your decision. We also facilitate **initiation ceremonies** for those who wish to celebrate this choice in a formal way.

Please contact us at contact@amzsociety.org to connect.

12. How does AZS work with FEZANA?

FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) is an umbrella organization for Zoroastrian groups across North America. Its members are organizations (not individuals), and most are rooted in Indian or Iranian cultural traditions. Each organization sets its own policies on inclusivity. **AZS plans to join FEZANA in the future as a member organization.**

The American Zoroastrian Society is the **first Zoroastrian organization built specifically to welcome all people interested in Zarathushtra's teachings**, regardless of cultural or ethnic background. Our focus is on accessibility, inclusion, and spiritual growth.

- We are creating a virtual-first community that uses English as the primary language and is focused on reaching the broader American public.
- Rather than preserving any specific cultural tradition, AZS emphasizes making Zarathushtra's message accessible to everyone—supporting the emergence of new American Zoroastrian traditions.
- Our core value is the universality of Zoroastrianism, as expressed in the Gathas.



AZS is also happy to receive referrals from culturally focused Zoroastrian organizations and, when appropriate, connect newcomers with local Zoroastrian groups in their area.

13. How can I learn more or get involved with AZS?

AZS is committed to educating **all those interested in Zarathushtra's teachings** and creating **an entirely inclusive virtual community**. Here are some ways to connect:

- Visit our website: <https://www.amzsociety.org>
- Join our email list by reaching out to contact@amzsociety.org
- Follow us on Instagram ([@AmZSociety](#)) and Facebook ([AmZSociety17](#))
- Take part in our online discussions and educational programs
- Reach out anytime with questions or for guidance on your spiritual journey

Thanks for your interest! Want to get more involved in planning AZS activities or join a committee? We'd love to hear from you — just email contact@amzsociety.org and let us know how you'd like to support and be part of the AZS family.

We welcome voices from all walks of life and every background — thanks for your interest and support!
