

Zahak, the dragon king essay



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This Iranian myth entitled: “Zahak, the Dragon King” taken from Firdawsi Shahnameh tell’s epic “The Book of Kings” tells us a story about the Persian throne. It begins with a summary of the situation; the ruler of Iran, Jamshid is a great leader who has brought numerous technological advancements, social structure, and health to the people of Iran until one fateful day; called Na Ruz, when he tells nobles that they should bow to him for he is so great and his thriving kingdom falls to ruin.

Next we are taken to a confrontation between Zahak, the son of Mardas, king of Arabs; a righteous just man who tended flock very well and gave help to whoever needed it, and Eblis a spirit of evil. Eblis coaxes Zahak into thinking that he is righteous and after a little push convinces Zahak that he his father does not deserve the throne and his blood must be shed., although when Zahak asks for instructions he is told that they will be received later.

One night when Mardas is going to bathe in his vast garden he falls into a pit that Eblis dug and is “destroyed,” with the thought of his back stabbing son. From this point Zahak was leader and completely under the evil spirit’s control leading up to Eblis touching Zahak, vanishing, and reappearing as two snakes attached to Zahak’s shoulders that doctors cannot understand and that regrow after being cut. In the form of a doctor Eblis tells Zahak that to appease the snakes they must be fed two brains a day, and Zahak begins sacrificing men.

We are then brought back to Jamshid, whose kingdom is in awry. His people decide that Zahak is their new king and both his armies combined. After giving Zahak his crown and throne Jamshid disappears for 100 years and

upon his return is captured by Zahak and cut in half, creating a kingdom of evil under Zahak. Reigning for over a thousand years we are brought to a point where Zahak has a nightmare of three warriors assassinating him and gathers a group of wise men to tell him a cure or “lose their heads.”

Reluctant to tell the truth the sages hold out for a few days until one comes out that Zahak will lose his throne to one who is not yet born and he will be dragged from his palace to the mountains just like his nightmare. Living in hiding all his life eventually Faridun, the chosen one, leads an army to take over the throne. After killing everyone in the palace and learning that Jamshid is missing Faridun takes the throne and Jamshid rushes back to find his whole city is armed against him.

He is confronted by Faridun who puts him in chains in the deepest cave he can find and goes on to rule for 500 years bringing nothing but good. Overall I thought that the tale was very riveting and kept my attention the whole time reading it. It reminded a great deal of the Sumerian epic: Gilgamesh where a similar fight for the throne and supernatural elements are present. The one question I am left with after reading is; does Zahak deserve to be punished even though the only evils he ever committed were under the influence of Eblis?