



## FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

**Subject Category** (circle one): Parsi Religion/Ceremony    History    Prayer    Gathas  
Comparative Religion    Shahnameh

**Age Group** (circle one): PreK-K    Grades 1-3    Grades 4-5    **Grades 6-8**    Grades 9-12

**Subject of the Lesson:** Amesha Spentas

### Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The Amesha Spentas are theological concepts of Zoroastrianism and mean 'Bountiful Immortal'. The Amesha Spentas are considered to be the attributes of Ahura Mazda that form the principles or the ethical structure that every Zoroastrian should live their life by.

According to the creation story, Ahura Mazda made the 7 creations/ Amesha Spentas. He created:

1. The sky - Khshathra Vairya ('best power and strength/ good dominion' - teaches us to use our power the right way with courage and strength)
2. The waters - Haurvatat ('perfection' - the pursuit of excellence in all that we do)
3. The earth – Spenta Armaiti ('holy devotion' – to be hardworking, passionate, and devoted to all that we do)
4. The plant kingdom – Ameretat ('immortality' - always doing our best so that the good lives on)
5. The animal kingdom - Vohu Manah (the 'good mind' - teaches us to use our good mind/ wisdom/ knowledge)
6. Human beings - Spenta Mainyu (the 'holy spirit' – teaches us to be a good Zoroastrian)
7. Fire - Asha Vehishta ('truth'- teaches us to live with truth and order)

As per the Creation Story, the Bundahishn, the first 6 creations were static, until Fire gave life to them all.

The importance of the Amesha Spentas is recognized in the Gathas, in specific prayers in the Khordeh Avesta and in all our ceremonies and festivals such as the Jashan ceremony, Gahambar, Muktdas and others. The first 7 days of the calendar are also dedicated to the 7 Amesha Spentas.

Taking care of the environment or the 7 creations (Amesha Spentas) is what is known as 'Ecology' in present times.

And these seven Amesha Spentas can be used and internalized in our present everyday lives in the following way:

1. Spenta Mainyu – You are a human being
2. You have Vohu Manah – good mind to think – have a vision, or a project



3. Using Asha Vehishta – truth and order. You research, get facts and organize your findings
4. With Spenta Armaiti – devotion. You have passion and work with devotion
5. Khashathra Vairya – power and strength. Enables you to fight and have courage to defend your work
6. With Haurvatat – perfection. You work till you reach perfection.
7. Ameretat – immortal. Once the work/project is perfect it becomes immortal. Libraries are full of books and work of people long gone, but their names remain alive even today.

**Suggested Material:**

Teacher made materials/ visual aids (pictorial representation of 7 Amesha Spentas and their symbols – handmade/ power point slides) (Also see Attachments #1 to #7)

**Vocabulary:**

Amesha Spenta (Holy Immortals); sky, water, earth, plant, animal, human beings, fire; Names of 7 Amesha Spentas (Khashatra Vairya, Haurvatat, Spenta Armaiti, Ameretat, Vohu Manah, Spenta Mainyu, Asha Vahishta); Attributes; Ecology; Ethics/ Morals;

**Lesson for students:**

1. Preview information learned in previous classes:
  - a. Introduction (Amesha Spentas means holy immortals; helpers of Ahura Mazda/ Ahura Mazda's army)
  - b. Physical representation of Amesha Spentas (sky, water, earth, plant, animal, man, fire) along with their Avestan names (Khashathra Vairya, Haurvatat, Spenta Armaiti, Ameretat, Vohu Manah, Spenta Mainyu, Asha Vahishta)
  - c. Link of Amesha Spentas to the first 7 days of calendar (Hormuz, Bahman, Ardibehsht, Shehrevan, Aspadarmad, Khordad, Amardad)
2. Connect to Ecology – taking care of environment and creations (Earth Day/ Recycling)
3. Link Amesha Spentas to Jashan ceremony – explain all the implements that are used in the ceremony and all the items representing the elements of nature – fruits, flowers, water, lemon juice (sherbet) nuts, sukhad and loban. Ask them to predict how each aspect is related to an Amesha Spenta.
4. Break students into groups and ask each group to create a short skit illustrating how someone might use their assigned Amesha Spenta in everyday life.
5. Link Amesha Spentas to Gathas (verses connected to Gathas) Ahura Mazdā as the “Creator” of Vohu Manah (Y. 44.4) and of Ašha (Y. 31.8) and the “father” of Vohu Manah (Y. 31.8, 45.4), Ašha (Y. 44.3; 47.2), and Ārmaiti (Y. 45.4).

Link to Gatha verses and translations: <http://www.avesta.org/yasna/yasna.htm>

Zarathushtra's revelation aided by 2 Amesha Spentas (Vohu Manah and Spenta Mainyu)

Recall the story of Zarathushtra's revelation. The two Amesha Spentas that led to



Zarathushtra's revelation of Ahura Mazda as the supreme God and his message of truth, wisdom, happiness, righteousness are brought to Zarathushtra by Vohu Manah – the Good Mind and Spenta Mainyu – the Good Spirit of Ahura Mazda. It is these 2 Amesha Spentas that form the mechanism for revelation and can help lead us to the fundamental principles in Zoroastrianism. Just like in the Bundahishn, 'fire' gave life to the other six creations, 'Vohu Manah' gave realization to Zarathushtra.

If you use your good mind, you will be a living example of the best of Ahura Mazda's spirit. One must use their good mind to do good, by grounding one's decisions in the key Zoroastrian principles of righteousness, truth, order, perfection, good power, immortality, wisdom and happiness.

Teachers can help navigate conversations in moral dilemmas, enabling children to share their thoughts.

#### **Activity for Students:**

1. What is your favorite Amesha Spenta and why
2. Conflict Resolution: How do you use the Amesha Spentas to resolve challenges in your life
3. Hold a debate on ethical and moral values; how do you connect them with the Amesha Spentas? (Refer to The Good Life Book, ZAGNY)
4. Create your own presentation of the Amesha Spentas and their use in daily life
5. Connect Amesha Spentas with Earth Day (ex: planting trees, seeds, flowers; clean up park/streams; conservation of water; save planet; don't pollute; care of animals)
6. Connect to Ava roj/ Ava Mah; Adar roj/ Adar Mah; Spendarmad Roj/ Spendarmad Mah
7. Tie in prayers to Amesha Spentas (Ardibehsht Yasht/ Atash Niyaesh, Tir Yasht, Avan Yasht, Khorshed Niyaesh, Meher Niyaesh, Sarosh Baj, Mah Bokhtar Niyaesh, Ardvi Sura Niyaesh, Diva no Namaskar, Nirang of Home Yasht venerating Plants)
8. Games: Charades; create their own games; Jeopardy

#### **Source:**

The Good Life Book, ZAGNY: <https://zagny.org/shop/books/the-good-life-book-4th-ed/>

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