



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

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

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

Lesson # (if applicable): 9

Subject of the Lesson: Baha'i Faith

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í faith is the youngest of the world's major religions. It was foretold by The Bab, Himself a Messenger of God, in 1844 in what is present-day Iran. Baha'u'llah declared his station as an independent Messenger of God in 1863. Baha'is referred to as the Bab and Baha'u'llah as Twin Manifestations (Messengers). They never met face to face.

Iran was then, and still is, primarily a Muslim country. The Faith was proclaimed by a young Persian named Sayyid Ali Muhammad who called Himself **The Báb**. He announced that another Messenger would soon arrive from God, who would be the latest in a line of Prophets which included Zoroaster, Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad. The Bab's teachings are very mystical. His dispensation (the duration of the Babi religion) was dramatic and brief and designed to spiritually prepare people to recognize the station of Baha'u'llah. Many of the Bab's followers were Islamic scholars.

The Bab was executed by firing squad and twenty thousand of his followers were martyred in 1850. Baha'u'llah was imprisoned in 1853 and exiled from Iran to what is present-day Israel.

- **Bahá'u'lláh**, which means the Glory of God in Arabic, was born Mirza Husayn Ali in 1817 to a wealthy, noble family.
- Bahá'ís **believe** that Bahá'u'lláh is the most recent **Manifestation** of God
- Bahá'u'lláh himself stated that He is not God's final Messenger.
- The Bahá'í Faith proclaims that **all religions** have true and valid origins
- The **idea of progressive revelation is of central significance for the Bahá'í Faith**
- Bahá'u'lláh taught that God intervenes throughout human history at different times to reveal more of Himself through his Messengers (called divine Messengers, or Manifestations of God)
- The central idea of the faith is that of **unity** – unity of God, of humanity and of religion. They believe that **people should work together for the common benefit of humanity.**



Summary of Bahá'í beliefs

God is transcendent and can't be known directly but can be known through the lives and spiritual teachings of his great prophets, the most recent of whom was Bahá'u'lláh.

All human beings have a soul that lives forever. All human beings are members of a single race, which should soon be united into a single global community. All human beings are different, but equal; there should be no inequality among races or sexes. All religions have the same spiritual foundations, but social laws change as humanity evolves.

The Bahá'í Faith may be unique in the way it accepts all other faiths as true and valid. Bahá'ís accept the divine nature of the missions of Zoroaster, Abraham, Moses, the Buddha, Jesus and the Prophet Muhammad. They believe each one was a further stage in the revelation of God. Other prophets and manifestations are also accepted by them.

Bahá'í beliefs about God:

- Bahá'ís believe there is one God and that all the universe and creation belong to Him.
- God is omnipotent, perfect and has complete knowledge of life.
- Bahá'ís believe that there has only ever been one God, who is called by different names in the different religions.
- God is too great to ever be understood by the finite human mind.
- Knowledge of God means knowledge of the attributes of God.
- Baha'u'llah teaches that as we sincerely humble ourselves, we become able to reflect God's attributes, like mirrors reflect the sun.
- Though we can never fully know and understand God, we can learn about God by experiencing such attributes as love, compassion, justice and so on, as we've been taught through time by all the Manifestations.
- The purpose of our lives is to acquire divine attributes that will serve us in the life beyond the physical plane.
- Since we can't comprehend God directly, the best way to get an idea of God is by looking at the lives and teachings of His Messengers, the Manifestations of God and at the world that God has created.

God and other religions

Bahá'ís believe that any description of God is bound to be colored and limited by the views and cultural background of the person making the description. Bahá'u'lláh thought that this was why different religions had different ideas of God. It was not that each religion was looking at a different reality



called God, they were all trying to describe the same reality, but their descriptions were built out of their own experiences and cultures, and so were different.

Thus, for a Bahá'í, the different views of God held by different religions are the closest that that particular culture and time could come to an idea of the absolute reality of God and which was helpful to the people of that culture. But, according to the Bahá'ís, these ideas of God are nothing like the true reality of God, because humans don't have the mental ability to understand that reality.

Incarnation

Bahá'ís believe that God cannot become incarnate in a human being.

Gender

Bahá'ís do not regard God as having a gender. Although the Bahá'í writings use a masculine pronoun to refer to God, that is only because of the style of English translation, **whereas in the Persian and Arabic languages, which Baha'u'llah used, there is just one word that means both “he” and “she.”**

The Kitáb-i-Aqdas (meaning the Book of Laws) is a central book of the Bahá'í Faith written in Arabic by Bahá'u'lláh in 1873. Another important book is the Kitáb-i-Iqán, the Book of Certitude. Baha'u'llah wrote about 15 thousand works.

Bahá'í Houses of **Worship** are meant as personal and collective places of prayer for anyone who wishes to visit. There is presently only one House of Worship in each continent -- the one for North America is in the Chicago area. Local Baha'i communities decide whether to buy or rent meeting places, depending on their community size and circumstances.

Regular Bahá'í meetings, called **Feasts**, occur once every Baha'i month which is 19 days long. The Feast includes a spiritual portion consisting of readings and prayers from Baha'i scripture, a business portion where local Bahá'í communities consult about community business and a social portion of food and fellowship.

Baha'is have no clergy but elect local and **national assemblies of nine individuals** as well as a world body which is elected by members of all the National Assemblies. Elections are held in an atmosphere of prayer by believers who become eligible at the age 21 to vote and to serve. Elections occur without nomination or electioneering. There are about 6 million Bahá'ís in the world.

Note: The material above was read and approved by Deb & Steve Vance, practicing Baha'is in Cincinnati, OH



Baha'i Holy Days:

Baha'i Holy Days are set and move according to the solar calendar. However, the birthdays of Bab and Bahauallah are set and move according to lunar calculations.

Dates below are for the years 2022-23:

- **March 21, 2022*** Naw Rúz, the Bahá'í New Year.
- **April 21, 2022*** First Day of Ridván (meaning "Paradise" in Arabic) — the most important of the Bahá'í Holy Days. It is the day on which Bahá'u'lláh declared His mission as a Messenger of God in the Garden of Ridván.
- **April 29, 2022*** Ninth Day of Ridván, the day on which Bahá'u'lláh's family joined Him in the Garden of Ridván.
- **May 2, 2022*** Twelfth Day of Ridván, the day on which Bahá'u'lláh and His family left the garden to travel to Constantinople.
- **May 24, 2022*** Declaration of the Báb, the anniversary of the Báb's announcement of His mission in 1844.
- **May 29, 2022*** Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, marking the passing of Bahá'u'lláh in 1892.
- **July 10, 2022*** Martyrdom of the Báb, who was executed in 1850.
- **October 26, 2022**** Birth of the Báb, 1819–1850. The Báb (meaning "Gate" in Arabic) is considered to have paved the way for the incarnation of Bahá'u'lláh, similar to the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Born in 1819 in Shiraz, Iran, The Báb's mission was to awaken the people to the fact that a new period in human history had begun. He called for spiritual and moral reformation – a revolutionary message in his time.
- **October 27, 2022**** Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, 1817–1892. Bahá'u'lláh was born in 1817 in Tehran, Iran and established the Bahá'í Faith whose principal teachings are the oneness of humanity, the oneness of religion and the oneness of God. The appearance of Bahá'u'lláh has been likened to a spiritual springtime, destined to spread peace and unity around the globe.
- **November 26, 2022**, Day of the Covenant, commemorating Bahá'u'lláh's appointment of His son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as the One to whom His followers should turn after His passing.
- **November 28, 2022**, Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, marking the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921.
- **February 25 – March 1, 2023**, Ayyám-i-Há (also known as the Intercalary Days), a period of celebration devoted to charity, gift-giving and festivities prior to the annual period of fasting.
- **March 2-20, 2023**, the month of fasting, during which Bahá'ís from the age of 15 abstain from food and drink between sunrise and sunset. There are exemptions, including for those who are ill, elderly, traveling, pregnant or breastfeeding.

Lesson for students:

1. Make a PowerPoint of the Material for teacher. Use PowerPoint to teach the lesson and to stop at appropriate sections to start a discussion.
2. Make a printout of the Material for teacher for each student or use a projector to display it on classroom wall (in a virtual class share screen the information). Have each student read a section before discussing it as a class.



3. Enhance the lesson by following up with a YouTube video.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmNWatW17kc>
 - b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQSGTa8Y2p4>
 - c. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNhkaDfzUWI>

The video can be stopped at different sections to discuss with the class a summarization of points said and comparing it to Zoroastrian beliefs and practices.

Activities for Students:

1. Fill out the comparative religion chart for Baha'i Faith and discuss the results with the class. Using the chart compare each section with Zoroastrianism.
2. Plan a field day to a Baha'i temple close to your center.
3. Plan an interfaith half day event with your local Baha'i community.
4. Invite a representative of Baha'i faith to your virtual or in person class to share information about the religion. Have each student have a question ready to ask the representative.
5. Have each student write one thing they found interesting about Baha'i faith on a small sheet of paper along with their name, fold it, and place it in a jar. Then have each student take out one of the folded sheets of paper, read the content, and ask the person whose name is on the sheet of paper why they found what they have written interesting and discuss with class.
6. How can we use Baha'i's teachings today to improve ourselves and our world? Give current event examples when possible.
7. Why do you think Baha'ism is marked as the fastest growing religion? Are the reasons different from what Zarathushtra teaches us? How? How can we relate the social and religious aspects of inclusivity of both faiths. What do we learn from it?
8. Visit the Teacher's Guide section of fezana.org/education and get ideas for in class and virtual activities by using "Activity Menu" and "Virtual Class ideas".

Sources:

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/bahai/>
2. en.wikipedia.org
3. www.Bahai.us/events-calendar/holy-days

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