



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: Calendar

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The Zoroastrian Calendar is unique and has 30 days and 12 months in which each day has a name and not a number. Presently, there are three (3) calendars that are followed by the Zoroastrians depending upon their traditions:

- Shenshahi/Shahanshahi – The Imperial Calendar followed by Parsi Zoroastrians who moved from Iran to India. This Calendar takes its beginning from the start of the rule of the last Sassanian Zoroastrian King Yezdegard III.
- Kadmi - meaning ‘ancient one’ - formed in the early 18th century; the Kadmi calendar differs by one month from the Shehenshahi calendar, due to a difference in calculation.
- Fasli or the seasonal calendar - which was instituted in 1906 with the purpose of starting the new year on the Spring Equinox (21st March).

All 3 calendars have the same names of the days and months.

As with all calendars, the Zoroastrian Calendar has 12 months or *Mah* and each month has a name. They are: Fravadin, Ardibehesht, Khordad, Tir, Amardad, Shehrevan, Meher, Avan, Adar, Dae, Bahman, and Aspandarmad.

In the Zoroastrian Calendar the 30 days or *Roj* represents 30 Yazatas. Each day embodies an ethical concept for Zoroastrians to live by. The first seven days of the calendar and their Yazatas are linked to the seven Amesha Spentas representing the importance of ecology in Zoroastrianism:

- Hormazd (Humans) - is linked to Dae pa Adar, Dae pa Mehr, Dae pa Din
- Bahman (Animals) - is linked to Mohor, Gosh, Ram
- Ardibehesht (Fire) - is linked to Adar, Sarosh, Behram
- Shehrevan (Sky) - is linked to Khorshed, Mehr, Asman, Aneran
- Aspandarmad (Earth) - is linked to Ava, Din, Ashishvangh, Mahrespand
- Khordad (Water) - is linked to Tir, Fravadin and Govad
- Amardad (Plants) - is linked to Rashne, Ashtad, Zamyad



When the day and month coincide, it is known as a '*Parabh*' – Example:

- a. Adar roj (day), Adar mah (month) – Adaryan Parabh
- b. Avan roj (day), Avan mah (month) – Avan Yazad Parabh
- c. Tir roj (day), Tir mah (month) – Tirgan Parabh
- d. Meher (day), Meher mah (month) – Mehergan Parabh
- e. Spendarmad roj, Spendarmad mah – Spendarmad roj Parabh
- f. Fravardin roj, Fravardin mah – Farvardegan Day

The Zoroastrian year consists of 12 months, or *mahs*, and each month has 30 days. 30 days x 12 months = 360 days, so at the end of the last month, there are 5 additional days known as the *Gathas* days that are added to the 12th month to make a 365-day year. The last 5 days of the 12th month (Spendarmad) together with the 5 Gatha days are collectively known as the 10 Muktdad days.

Special days on the calendar are known as 'Humkara' days - ex: Hormazd, Ardibehsht, Adar, Avan, Sarosh, Behram

Some Parsis do not eat meat on 'unrojo days' (meatless), i.e., days dedicated to Bahman, Mohor, Gosh and Ram roj, in respect to the creation of the animals.

A reminder - all days are good days in the Zoroastrian calendar

Suggested Material:

1. 30-day Zoroastrian calendar

Vocabulary: Shenshai/Shahanshahi, Kadmi, Fasli, Roj, Mah, Yazata; Humkar, Humakara, Parab (the day the roj and month coincide), Names of the Yazatas

Lesson for students:

1. Introduction and structure of the calendar (3 calendars are followed - Shehenshai, Kadmi, Fasli, 30 days (Roj); 12 months (Mah), The Amesha Spentas form the first 7 days of the calendar
2. Pictorial presentation of the 30 rojes to help convey the meanings
3. Daily Zoroastrian value system through the calendar - use the Yazatas to guide you to live a Zoroastrian life
4. Prayers that relate to day as per the relevant Yazatas - ex: pray Behram Yasht on Behram roj
5. Calculation of the number of days in a year - A year consists of 12 months, or *mahs*, and each month has 30 days. Each of these days is known as a *roj*, and each roj has a name. As 30 days * 12

months = 360 days, there are an additional 5 days (*gathas*) added to the 12th month to make a 365 day year. Why does the Roj not coincide with the Gregorian Calendar? Introduce the number of days in a solar calendar and introduce the term Intercalation in the Zoroastrian Calendar system.

6. Which rojes are related to each other (for example Adar/ Ardibehsht/ Khorshed/ Dae pa Adar)



Ref: *The Story of our Religion Zoroastrianism by Ava Mehta*

Activity for Students:

1. Develop a ‘thought for the day’ for one month of the calendar
2. Bingo with the rojes
3. Discussion: What roj are you born on? What is its meaning? What is your favorite roj and why?

Source:

1. The Story of Our Religion - Zoroastrianism by Ava Mehta
2. An Ethnic Perspective by Khojeste Mistree
3. Joyous Flame, Parzor
4. Good Life, ZAGNY

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