



## FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

**Subject Category (circle one):** Iranian 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

**Lesson # (if applicable):**

**Subject of the Lesson:** Environment (Taking care of environment)

### Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

As humans, our lives are inextricably linked to the environment. Our ancestors, knowing the importance of this connection, strived to protect nature. An important part of Iranian and Zoroastrian culture is to ensure that our interaction with nature occurs without harming the environment.

### FOUR ELEMENTS:

In Zoroastrian culture, creation is described by four important elements of nature. These four elements are earth, water, air, and fire. Protecting the environment and ecology is an important part of Zoroastrian teachings.

#### **WATER**

A great effort has been made by Iranians, to protect and use water properly. One example was the construction of subterranean aqueducts in desert regions as a method of not wasting water and keeping it clean. Iranians had religious obligations to keep water clean. For this reason, they did not put trash in water, or wash their clothes in running water. They were conscious of keeping the water clean as they understood the connection between sickness and unclean water.

#### **AIR**

Other examples of environmental protection can be seen in Iranian architecture. For example, special towers called "Badgir" in Persian, were used to direct air inside homes to help regulate the temperature. In the summer, the wind would cool the home, and, in the winter, they kept the warm air inside. In addition, this allowed Iranians to efficiently use subterranean spaces as part of their homes.

#### **EARTH**

It is important to produce less waste and dispose of waste properly. In addition, we need to protect trees and soil for maintaining healthy plants and animals.



## **FIRE**

Lighting fires in designated and appropriate areas in addition to not burning waste that would create hazardous chemical fumes into the air, is important.

## **PLANTS AND TREES**

Protecting plants and creating green environments is important to Zoroastrians. In Ancient Iran, killing a tree was considered wicked. It carried a punishment equal to that of murder! Many animals including dogs and seals were well protected.

## **USHTA/HAPPINESS**

Zarathushtra teaches us to live a happy life. This happiness is one that radiates out to others. (Ushta = radiant happiness). Happiness is for us, our family, community, and the living world. A happy life leads to a healthy life; as one who is unwell, cannot experience full happiness. Also, a happy individual is more likely to be a beneficial member of the community.

Living according to Asha includes a life that is healthy, happy, and harmonious with nature. As such, we need to take care of the environment. We need to keep it clean; just as we do with our own homes. We share the Earth with other living and non-living beings. Therefore, keeping our environment clean, will benefit all those residing on Earth and lead to global happiness.

Today, we are the keepers of this important culture. We need to use today's advanced knowledge to carry on protecting the Earth.

## **CONNECTIONS TO THE CALENDAR**

Zoroastrian celebrations have a strong connection with ecology. These celebrations help remind us to stay connected with our environment and protect it.

The Zoroastrian Calendar is a testament to our connection to nature and cycles of the Earth throughout the year. Our ancestors understood and honored this connection. Many of the names given to each day in the Zoroastrian calendar relates to the natural elements such as Aban (water), Azar (fire), Baad (air, wind), etc. Each name can remind us of the particular element. The Zoroastrian monthly celebrations also have a close tie to nature.

## **WHEN THE DAY OF THE MAH (MONTH) IS THE SAME AS THE NAME OF THE ROZ(DAY)**

The monthly celebrations such as Khordadgan, Abangan and Tirgan are related to water. Since ancient times, Iran was not a land with abundant amounts of water, hence these special days brought people's attention to the conservation and protection of water and its correct and efficient usage.

Amordadgan is about planting trees and relates to plants. This celebration reminds us of protecting the forests, meadows, etc. Bahmangan is about protecting domestic animals. Since ancient times,

people have seen the importance of animals such as horses, cows, sheep, etc. in their lives. However, with advances in science, today we know the importance of protecting all animals.

Spendarmazgan is about protecting the Earth. Earth, which is connected to water, soil and plants, is our most important resource and it is our duty to protect it and keep it clean. **Nabor** which is practiced four days in a month is about protecting domestic animals such as cow, chicken, etc. since on these days we do not consume meat.

**Gahanbars**, the six seasonal celebrations, represent a different aspect of nature. We remember and honor Air, Water, Earth, Fire, Animals, and Humans in each of these celebrations. They are seasonal and coincide with the harvest and other earthly cycles.

#### **Lesson for students:**

1. Read the story “Save the Earth” for the students.  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/18hLLuZOEFCQAQyH0\\_Yy6K16a87t8QDmJH/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/18hLLuZOEFCQAQyH0_Yy6K16a87t8QDmJH/view?usp=sharing)
2. Read “Save Water Everyday” by Mari Schuh
  - a. Tell students about the importance of water in Zoroastrian culture and how our ancestors kept water clean and did not waste water.
3. Find children’s books to emphasize environment and then relate it to Zoroastrian culture.
4. Use “The Four Elements in Zoroastrianism” (#1 of the activity section) to teach the lesson by setting a table of the four elements.

#### **Activities for Students:**



### **Zoroastrianism and the Environment**

## The Four Elements in Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrian religious ceremonies require preparation of a table including some seed-bearing fruits (apple, pomegranate, or watermelon), fire, a jar of water and some branches of evergreen (sarv) or moort. This table represents the four elements of nature: water, fire, earth, and air.

1. Make a four elements table with your students. As a pre-activity, ask families to send two objects to be placed on the table. Then have a table with each element clearly marked out. Have children come up and place their objects in the correct quadrant.
2. DRAW - create a blank template with 4 quadrants. Ask the students to draw the objects on the table from each of the four elements.
3. WHICH OBJECTS BELONG ON THE TABLE? Create a handout in which pictures of the objects from the four quadrants (that were on the table) are mixed in with other everyday objects. Ask students to color and circle the objects they placed on the table in the earlier activity.
4. Have a planting day with students. During Norouz time - bring sprouted wheat, soil, recycled containers, and plant the seeds with students to take home and care for.
5. At any other time of the year, if your center has a vegetable garden or a garden, you can plant seeds with your class and water them at each class to watch them grow. As a culminating activity, you could harvest the plants and prepare a salad together.
6. Read the sentences and number the pictures.



### Sources:

1. "Din Amooz" 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Barsam Publication
2. <https://www.weareteachers.com/meaningful-earth-day-activities/>

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