



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 encompasses 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:

Discuss the importance of the environment in Zoroastrianism. Give students examples illustrating the importance of ecology to our ancestors. Show pictures of ancient gardens and the badgirs.

Next, relate the relevance of protecting the four elements (water, air, fire and earth) in Zoroastrianism to today's environmental problems. Below are possible ways to begin a dialogue about keeping the environment clean:

1. Show students a YouTube video on the damage of added plastic to the environment, oil in the ocean water, and how they are affecting marine life.
2. Discuss the destruction of forests and what effects it may have on the Earth's ecology.
3. Start discussing why families keep their home clean, wash dishes, sweep the floor, etc. The Earth is like our home. How can we keep it clean and fresh?
4. Read the story "Save the Earth" with the link below and discuss with class.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/18hLLuZOEFCQAQyH0_Yy6K16a87t8QDmJH/view?usp=sharing

Activities for Students:

1. Plan a recycling project for your center. Ask families to bring plastic bottles. On a designated date take the bottles with your class to a recycling center. You can use the money to buy a recycling bin for your class or center.
2. Planting project: Have the students bring in an empty plastic container from home (ex. Empty cottage cheese container, etc. to demonstrate "Reusing"). Bring soil and geranium cut stem or such and plant them with class. The students will take their plant home and take care of them.

3. Read the book: *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rainforest* or watch the read aloud book on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1Teb-jTyI&ab_channel=MrBaker%27sBookshelf
 Then discuss what you learned from the book.
4. You can also start a recycling program at your center where you put up signs for different bins. After the meals at each function, families should recycle/compost all plates and wasted food.
5. Ask your center to serve food using biodegradable utensils, plates, and cups. Raise money as a class if they say it's too expensive! Make posters to bring awareness about WASTE.
6. When cooking or using caterers, ask for local and/or organic ingredients to reduce your "food miles" and support local farms.
7. Getting inspired by the example, write your own poem, and decorate with creative drawings.



8. Fill in the blanks.

Take Care of the 4 Elements: Earth, Water, Air, and Fire

Things I can do to help the Earth are:

1. I promise to reuse these items:

2. Things I can do to save water are:

I will _____ with _____
 always remember to
 Take care of
 Earth, Water, Air, and Fire

Sources:

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

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