



## 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 the 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 the health of plants.



## **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:**

Using the material for teachers, make a PowerPoint with photos to show students the importance of the environment and taking care of the four elements in Zoroastrian culture.

Show students a video about how pollution is affecting life on Earth.

Suggestions:

- How humans are affecting the earth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-nEYsyRIYo>
- How to save our planet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Puv0Pss33M>
- 10 Inventions that are saving the planet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hof0Sss2138>

### **Activity for Students:**

1. Break the class into four groups and give each group one of the four elements. Ask the group to find out how their special element is being affected by our style of living and as per Zoroastrian belief of caring for environment, what can we do. Each group can make a board displaying:
  - a. How is each element affected?
  - b. What our Zoroastrian belief teach us?
  - c. How can we care for the element?

You can show the YouTube video “10 Inventions that are saving the planet”. To point out how taking a progressive approach which is a Zoroastrian way that we can make a difference.

2. The class can discuss and organize a day for the younger students specific to the importance of caring for the environment. For example, they can make activity booths. At one booth, they can plant, at another booth they can make recycling signs and so forth.



3. At this age level, students can pick a local issue and lobby/fundraise/create a campaign for definitive action. It can be particular to their geographical region. Keep it small enough to make gains and make a difference. Students can tie this into their high school volunteer hours and other initiatives.
4. They can also use social media/power point/google slides/Kahoot and other programs to create content for the younger students in class.
5. Students can also organize a beach cleanup field day, fundraising to have a compost bin for the center, or a planting day at the center's garden.

**Sources:**

“Din Amooz” 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Barsam Publication

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