



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: Freedom in Zoroastrianism

Background Content for Teacher:

Goal: As a Zoroastrian we believe in freedom of choice and free will. That is, we have a hand in shaping our future, making our own decisions, and paving our own destiny by making beneficial daily choices. Students should understand there are events that we control and those that are out of our control. A good living is to exercise our freedom to shape the situations to benefit all.

Things we cannot control:

We all see events taking place around us that we do not have control over. For example, how our friend reacts when angry. We live alongside other animals on Earth and are a small planet in the Milky Way among thousands of other galaxies. We cannot change many things that surround us, for example, natural events such as earthquake, or storms causing destruction and death.

Things we can control:

We have control and freedom over many things in our lives including the choices we make. For example, if a student has not finished the day's homework, he/she can take the responsibility and make it a lesson not to repeat in the future or copy a friend's homework to turn in. We cannot fly and don't have control over gravity but by increasing our knowledge of the laws of physics, we have made airplanes to fly from one place to another.

Our freedom and how we can react to different events:

We cannot change how others react towards different events, but we can choose how to react ourselves. Humans can somewhat shape their family and their community. They can create and invent new tools. Faced with uncontrollable circumstances, we can do what we can to shape our lives and move ahead. We have personal freedom in our individual lives, in how we react to others or how we connect with our community, approach art, literature or how we use different tools such as guns.

Below are some examples of events out of control and choices we can make:

1. If fire sirens go off in school, each student may react differently. We must learn to confront events which are out of our control with constructive attitude and tools of improvement. For



the mentioned situation if a student is not acting rationally during a fire alarm, we can talk to them to calm them down or help them to the correct exit. We may not be able to control the school fire, but authorities can place fire extinguishers around school to help put out the fire.

2. After a heavy storm, communities can help one another in rebuilding the damaged homes. We use the energy from wind, sun, and water to create electricity. We created ships and submarines to travel the oceans, seas and explore under water. We continuously seek to explore and create changes in our environment.

A realistic approach to life is one that correctly expresses our constructive attitude toward things we can and cannot control. In the Gathas, composed by Ashu Zarathushtra about 3800 years ago, he talks about using our good mind and personal freedom to find constructive solutions.

Gathas, Yasna 31 Verse 11 (Song 4.11):

**“O Wise One, at the beginning,
You, through Your mind,
Fashioned for us the living world,
Conceptions and intellects,
Put life in the physical frame,
And gave deeds and words,
So that one makes his choice through free will.”**

Translation by Dr. AA Jafarey

We live in a world created with properties out of our control, however, we have been created with strengths such as intellectual thinking. We are in control of what we say and do. There is another lesson in the above verse and that is as humans have freedom and liberty, and with this freedom comes the acceptance of responsibility for what we say and do.

Yasna 48 Verse 4 (Song 13.4):

**Whoever, Wise One, has set his mind on the better or the worse,
Sets his conscience accordingly with actions and words.
His desire follows his cherished choice.
But in Your wisdom, the end of the two will be different.**

Translation by Dr. AA Jafarey

Our thoughts pave the way for our deeds. If we set our mind toward productivity, righteousness, fairness and beneficial living our action will follow and will lead to a better living. A mindset for wrongdoing, and druj will result in the worse living.



Good to know:

Historically, there have been individuals who have tried to change the circumstances within their surroundings and believed that humans are not subject to fate.

1. One of these individuals was Pashootan Ji Dusabhai Markar born in 1871, India. He was a Zoroastrian living in India and cherished the love for his motherland. He continuously thought of ways to improve the lives of the Zoroastrians living in Iran. He understood that educating the youth and providing them with helpful tools is the best way to improve the community. He established educational boarding facilities for girls and boys of low-income families regardless of religion to get educated and learn a trade, or art. He provided an opportunity for these children to have a home, food, proper education and to be beneficial members of their community as an adult. Markar made a difference and showed that each person can make the world a better place.

Below is a narrative recounted about Markar:

Markar's trade was mostly in India, but he traveled a lot due to work and management of the boarding schools in Iran. He used a thrifty method of travel. People would ask him, why he would pain himself when he could travel in style and comfort. Markar would answer that the money saved from a thrifty travel would pay for a child's education.

2. Another of these individuals was Farangis Shahrokh Yeganegi She was born in 1916 in Iran daughter of another individual who used his liberty to improve lives, Keykhosrow Shahrokh. "Farangis was the honorary President of Zoroastrian Women Organization, the first Executive Director of Iranian Handicraft Organization, member and Director of South California Zoroastrian Center, and founder of Yeganegi-Kaykhosrow Shahrokh Library. She rendered invaluable services to the Iranian society and specifically to the Zoroastrian community, among them the printing of books related to the culture and civilization of Iran. She was also one of the founders of the Anjuman of Ancient Iranian Culture and took important steps in improving the state of women in prisons." 2 She was the co-establisher of Ancient Iranian Organization, helped improve orphanage, and she was a pro women's activist. She received woman of the year by UCLA and in 1996 received medal of honor by FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Association of Northern America).

Lesson for students and activity section are combined:

Lesson Title: "The Power of Choice in Our Hands"



Objectives/Learning Targets:

To empower students to understand that, despite life's uncontrollable factors, we possess significant control over our responses and actions. By making informed decisions, we can be constructive and positively impact ourselves and others.

Essential Questions:

1. What events in life are beyond our control?
2. What daily decisions or actions are within our control?

Materials Needed:

- Sample scenarios
- List of notable Zoroastrians and their stories

Introduction (5 minutes):

"Our focus today is understanding our power over events we can control. As Zoroastrians, we strive to harness this power to better ourselves, assist others, and elevate the world around us."

Vocabulary (3 minutes):

- Druj: Deceit in Zoroastrianism
- Freedom: The power to act, speak, or think without hindrance or restraint

Direct Instruction (10-15 minutes):

Explain that controllable events fall into two categories:

1. Actions we decide upon in controllable situations.
 - This point emphasizes that there are situations or events in our daily lives where we have a choice or control over our actions. For instance, choosing to study for a test, deciding to help someone in need, or opting to wake up early. These are all controllable actions, meaning they're decisions we actively make and directly influence the outcome of those decisions.
 - Example for Explanation in Class: "Imagine you have homework due tomorrow. You can choose to complete it today, or you can postpone it and risk not having it done in time. In this situation, whether you do your homework or not is entirely in your control. Your decision will directly impact the outcome, which is whether your homework is completed on time."



2. Our emotional responses to uncontrollable events.

- Life will always present us with situations that are beyond our control, like the weather, someone else's behavior, or unexpected events. While we can't change these situations, we have control over how we react or feel about them. This point focuses on the understanding that our emotions and reactions to these uncontrollable events are choices we make.
- Example for Explanation in Class: "Suppose it starts raining, and you had plans to play outside. You can't control the weather, right? But you can control how you feel about it. You can choose to be upset that your plans were ruined, or you can decide to see it as an opportunity to do something different indoors. Maybe read a book or play a board game. How you feel about the rain is a choice you make."

Guided Practice (15 minutes):

Introduce stories of notable Zoroastrians, emphasizing their choices in life. Discuss and analyze their decisions and the resulting impacts.

Independent Practice:

Present scenarios (either individually or in groups). Students must analyze and discuss potential responses based on the lesson's principles.

Example: Babak excels in math and offers tutoring. However, some peers bully him out of jealousy.

Questions to ponder:

- What elements can Babak control in this scenario?
- How might Babak leverage his control for everyone's benefit?
- If you were in Babak's shoes, what would you do?

Summary/Closing Activity (5 minutes):

Facilitate an open discussion. Encourage students to share their takeaways from the lesson, emphasizing the day's primary objective.

Learning Extensions: (Optional)

Prompt students to apply the lesson's concepts in their daily lives, highlighting instances where they made conscious choices in controllable situations.

Assessment: (Optional)

Reflect on the lesson's effectiveness, considering areas of improvement for future sessions.



Sources:

1. Amoozesh e Din o Farhang e Zartoshti 7th grade.
2. <http://www.amordaden.blogfa.com/post/919>

Prepared by: Artemis Javanshir

Lesson for student and activity by: Nilufar Kamdar

Edited by: Tanaz Karai and Nilufar Kamdar

Date: 8/2023