



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Religion/Ceremony History Prayer Gathas
Comparative Religion Shahnameh

Age Group (circle one): Perk-k Grade 1-3 **Grade 4-5** Grades 6-8 Grades 9-12

Lesson # (if applicable):

Subject of the Lesson:

Initiation ceremony: Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Initiation to the religion:

A ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions, or objects, performed in a certain place and according to a set sequence. A ritual during which a person is admitted to an organization or given secret knowledge; sometimes contains one or more tests that have to be passed or endured. This is called an Initiation Ceremony. Many Religions have Initiation Ceremonies, today we will learn about some.

Zoroastrianism-

Navjote- means new (nav) worshipper (jote). The initiation ceremony to the Zoroastrian Faith. The term navjote is used primarily by the Zoroastrians of India (the Parsis), while sedreh pushi is used primarily by the Zoroastrians of Iran meaning to wear the sedreh. The child prepares months or years learning the prayers and religious education of the basic concepts of the faith.

The ceremony should ideally be done when the youth has studied the religious concepts and can make freely choose to follow the teachings of Zarathushtra and decide to go through the Navjote or Sedreh Pushi ceremony to celebrate this choice with family and friends. In Parsi tradition, Navjote is done before a boy or girl reaches puberty. At the time of the Navjote ceremony the child wears the Sudreh/Sedreh (undergarment) and the Kusti/koshti (sacred thread) around the waist.

If the child goes through Navjote or Sedreh Pushi at a young age, it will be the responsibility of the parents to guide their child in further religious and moral education. The sacred thread and shirt also teach children responsibility, as they are to be untied before certain practices, such as bathing and re-tied shortly after the task is completed.

Wearing the kushti/koshti acts as a reminder and a conscious and willful decision to make good choices and do good deeds on a daily basis. It is expected for the individual to wear his/her Sudreh/Sedreh and Kushti/Koshti every day.



Christianity-

Baptism-initiation to the faith; being cleansed of original sin; starting fresh and new; necessary to enter heaven. Infants or young children can be baptized when they are ready to make a fresh start. That can be at any age when they make that commitment.

Eucharist or Holy Communion- sip of wine and bread signifying the blood and body of Christ which unites the closeness to Jesus Christ. A baptized child's First communion is usually celebrated around age 7 or 8.

Confirmation- deepens the strength of the baptism by earning the rite of confirmation in due time. In different parts of the world, it can be earned in teen years usually around age 13 when the child is old enough to obtain special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ. A bishop or priest normally performs the rite, which includes the laying on hands in prayer and blessing and anointing of the forehead with chrism (holy oil) with the words, "Be sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit" This "seal" signifies the person a member of the church.

Judaism- Bar (son)/Bat (daughter) mitzvah (commandment or law)

According to Jewish law this ceremony signifying the coming of age for a child. Between the ages of 12-13, the child will have the ceremony where they are now accountable for their actions. Prior to the bar/bat mitzvah their parents are responsible for their child's actions.

This initiation ceremony consists of reciting passages of the Torah, lead services, deliver a speech or demonstrate his newfound status.

The child now bears their own responsibility for Jewish ritual law, traditions and ethics and now can participate in all areas of Jewish Community life.

Hinduism- Threading Ceremony

Upanayana- the act of leading to enlightenment. The rite of passage symbolizing the leading or drawing to the self of a child, in a school, by a teacher. It is a ceremony where the guru (teacher) accepts and guides the child towards knowledge and initiates the second birth that is the young mind and spirit.

The upanayana is an elaborate ceremony that includes rituals involving the family, the child, and his teacher. During the ceremony the boy received the sacred thread *Yajñopaveetam* that he wears across his left shoulder to his waist.



One can compare the Upanayana rite of passage to the Baptism in Christianity where the person is born again unto spiritual knowledge, as the ceremony marked the initiation of the student for spiritual studies such as the Vedas.

Islam – does not have a formal initiation ceremony into the religion.

There are no ceremonies or rituals for conversion to Islam. Once a person has studied, discussed and has satisfied his heart and mind, they can make a declaration “I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and messenger”. This is a personal declaration alone or in the presence of other people or with other people. The focus is more on internal acceptance of truth and making a commitment to lead one’s life in accordance with the Will of God.

Lesson for students:

1. Refer to Initiation Power Point document
2. Discussion:
What do all these religions have in common and what are the differences?
 - a. They all have a declaration of joining the religion
 - b. Which ones have a public and which private declaration.
 - c. Is having an initiation ceremony important? Why and why not.
 - d. What are some of the rituals performed for each initiation ceremony?

Activity for Students:

1. Refer to Initiation Ceremony-Activity 1
2. Lay out photos relevant to initiation ceremony in different faiths. Discussed each ceremony and make a game for students to identify which picture is related to what religion.
3. Refer to Initiation Ceremony-Activity 2-Coloring:
Have students choose one of the coloring sheets pertaining to each religion and color. Then have them share with the class what they have learned about that particular faith’s initiation ceremony. How is it similar or different from Zoroastrian initiation ceremony?
4. Break the class to groups and assign each group the initiation ceremony of one of the religions.
 - a. Ask each group to create a graphic (Venn diagram, mind map, etc.) to compare Zoroastrian initiation with the initiation ceremony of the religion assigned to them. Do they have similar practices? Do they share common community involvements? etc.
 - b. Share what they learned with the class
 - c. Then have each group choose an initiation ceremony by a different religion than they originally chose and add it to their graphic and discuss.



Sources:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navjote>

<https://www.learnreligions.com/the-sacraments-of-initiation-542133>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar_and_bat_mitzvah

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upanayana>

<https://www.ahmadiyya-islam.org/questions/is-there-a-ceremony-for-conversion-initiation-to-enter-islam-ahmadiyyat/>

<https://www.britannica.com/list/the-seven-sacraments-of-the-roman-catholic-church>

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1912609/jewish/Bar-Mitzvah-When-It-Is-and-How-to-Celebrate

Prepared by: Shiraz Antia

Edited by: Tanaz Karai and Persis Driver

Date: 5/2022