



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Religion/Ceremony Celebration **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): Lesson 2

Subject of the Lesson: Introduction to History

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Goal: To give students an overview of the time and location of these series of lessons. In addition, to give students perspective of how the society accounts for time.

The Material for teacher has been combined with the lesson for student to make the lesson interactive.

Startup questions:

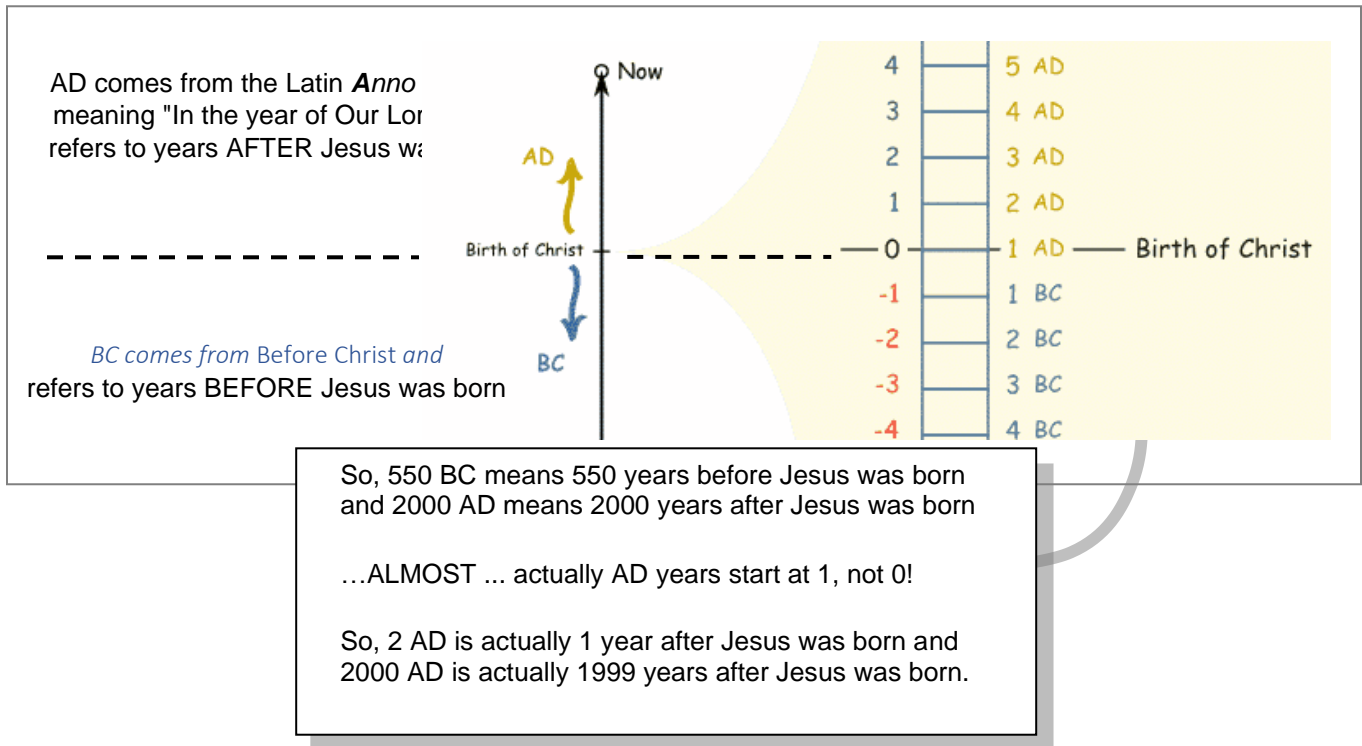
WHERE: What part of the world are we talking about?
Can you name these modern-day countries?





What do the B.C., A.D., B.C.E., and C.E. mean?

Sometimes you see dates written like **2000 AD** or **550 BC**, what is the difference between the two?



The abbreviation BC stands for "Before Christ," while AD stands for *Annō Domini*, which translates to "in the year of the lord." The lord that's being referenced, as *BC* hints at, is Jesus Christ. The alternative to using *BC* and *AD* would be to use BCE, which means "Before Common Era," and CE, which means "Common Era." Despite removing Christianity from the name, *BCE* and *CE* are still tied to the original Christian idea of *BC* and *AD*. That's because all of these abbreviations use the same date as the starting point for when to count forward and when to count backward, meaning the date is the same whether you use the secular or Christian abbreviation. Ultimately, using *BCE* and *CE* gets around the issue of labeling years in accordance with a single religion while also keeping the dates as we know them.

Zoroastrian year:

Before the creation of *BC* and *AD*, people marked the years by who was in power. Ancient Romans named their years based off of how long a consul or emperor had ruled, while Egyptians similarly counted their years based on the years a king ruled.



The **Zoroastrian** calendar uses the *Y.Z.* suffix (*Yazdegard Era*) or *AZ* (After Yazdegard) indicating the number of years since the coronation in 632 CE of *Yazdegerd III*, the last monarch of the *Sassanian* Dynasty. The year 2014, is AY 1385.

Today, some Zoroastrian organizations such as Zoroastrian Organization of Tehran and California Zoroastrian Center use 3760 as the Zoroastrian year. They choose to mark the start of the Zoroastrian calendar year as the accepted year of Zarathushtra's life date when Zarathustra proclaimed the religion (March 21, 1737, BCE-vernal equinox). This year was proposed by Dabih/Zabih Behruz (also spelt Behrooz) (1889-1971 CE) a Persian satirist.

Interesting Fact:

In the sixth century, people in power wanted a consistent way to keep track of the years. Christian leaders wanted a set and agreed upon date for Easter.

The monk Dionysius Exiguus, who lived in what is today Romania and Bulgaria in the year 525, started a movement to define time as "before Christ" and "after Christ". This removed the notion of writing dates based on the number when a Roman emperor ruled.

Dionysius never recorded how he decided on the date of Jesus Christ's birth. Some scholars think he used astrological signs, while others believe he based his assertion on the Bible. The gospels don't necessarily agree on that date, though, the Gospel of Matthew notes that Jesus was born when Herod the Great, who died in 4 BCE, was in power; while the Gospel of Luke notes the birth was when Quirinius was governor of Syria around 6 CE. What we do know, however, is that Dionysius was successful in promoting his timeline, and it became the standard used to this day.

The years before what Dionysius set as Jesus's birthday weren't universally named for another couple hundred years. An English monk named Bede came up with the idea of *BC*, or "Before Christ," in 731. Suddenly, there was a systematic way to label the years that happened after the year that Dionysius declared Jesus was born, and it counted backward rather than forward.

Of note: zero never made it into the equation. The concept of zero didn't make it to Europeans until the 1100s. The Gregorian calendar—which replaced the Julian calendar and is still used today—was made in 1582. *BC* and *AD* were also used by the International Organization for Standardization in 1988 when setting the years to be used for international business and government.



Other Calendars

There are other ways of saying what year it is!

For example, the *ancient Hindu Kali Yuga calendar* and *Mayan calendar* were both started about the same time over 5000 years ago

In the **Jewish** calendar Sept 2014 to Sept 2015 is the year 5775.

Muslims have dates that relate to Mohammad's emigration from Mecca to Medina called the *Hejira*, and so they use *AH* dates. The Year 2014 AD is 1435 AH (but the years don't have an *exact* match, because AH years are shorter!)

More Material about Calendars...

What year are we living in? That seems like an easy question, doesn't it? But like most things, the answer isn't as straightforward as you may think. Many people would tell you this is the year A.D. 2020. Others might call it the year 2020 C.E. Some would say it's the year 4718, 1441, or even 5780! It all depends on which of the world's many calendars you're reading.

Today, most countries use the Gregorian calendar as their civil calendar. That means it's used for official purposes, like government and business. Established by Pope Gregory XIII in 1577, the Gregorian calendar marks years using the abbreviations B.C. and A.D.

And, while most countries use the Gregorian calendar as their civil calendar, many still recognize other religious and cultural calendars as well. For instance, the Hebrew calendar, developed in 359 C.E., is a lunisolar calendar used by the nation of Israel and many Jews worldwide. On this calendar, we're living in the year 5780.

There's also the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar. It starts in the year 622 C.E., which was when the prophet Muhammed moved to Medina. The Islamic calendar uses the abbreviation A.H., which means "year of the Hijra." This calendar has 354 days, and it's currently in the year 1441. Because the Islamic calendar is shorter than the Gregorian calendar, the two will one day be in the same year—in 20784 C.E.!

Have you ever celebrated the Chinese New Year? If so, you know it does not start on January 1st. The Chinese calendar is lunisolar and goes back to the 14th Century B.C.E. This calendar also measures time



When was Jesus really born?

Most historians agree Jesus was not actually born on December 25th, but we really don't know when he was born.

Some have approximations such as "late fall" while others have specific dates like August 22nd.

In fact, some historians put the actual birth of Jesus 4 years earlier (4 BC).



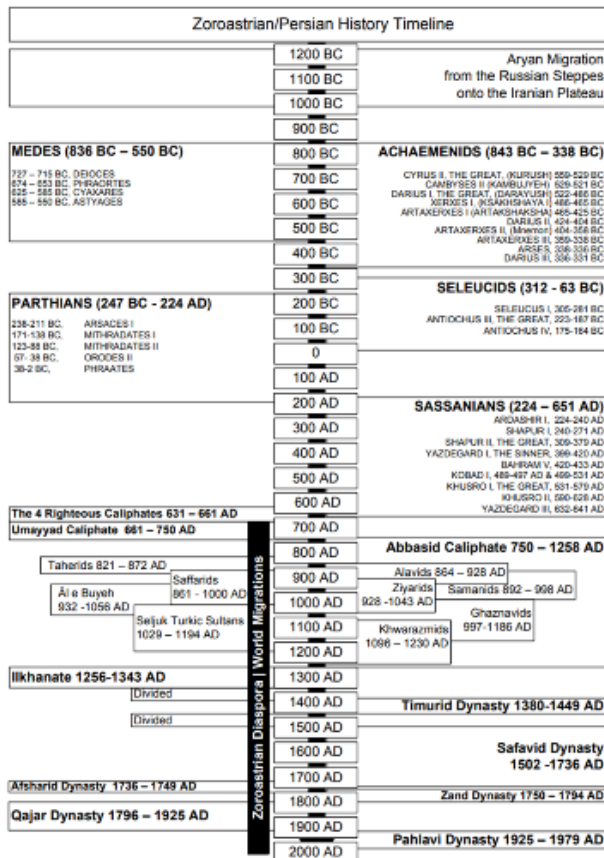
in 60-year cycles. The year 2020 is the year 4718 on the Chinese calendar. It's the 36th year in the current cycle.

And that's not all! The Persian calendar is widely used in Afghanistan and Iran. The ancient Hindu calendar has changed to become several regional Indian calendars today. Cultural events in these countries often follow the Persian and Indian calendars.

Of course, many other calendars have fallen almost completely out of use. The Mayan calendar is one of the most well-known, but the Roman calendar was also once widely used. And, during the French Revolution, people in France created a calendar that started over with the first year of their revolt. If it were still in use today, this year would be the *an 228 de la Révolution!*

Do you mark years with B.C. and A.D.? Do you use B.C.E. and C.E. instead? Whatever your preference, it's fun to learn about other ways of telling time. And of course, the more calendars you learn about, the more holidays you will know about, too!

WHEN: When are we talking about?



Indo-European Migration:

Those peoples who are now known as Indo-Europeans were the most widely ranging ethnic group in ancient times. There are various theories about the precise location of their original homeland. The most probable theory is that they were originally located somewhere on the northern edge of the Caucasus Mountains. These form a range of peaks that sits between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and which today is largely within the borders of Georgia and the southern tip of Russia. The Indo Europeans then expanded out from there, most of them going north into the steppes (Image 1). Due to their existence on the steppes as cattle and horse raising people, they were quite mobile, a characteristic which they shared with other steppe nomads such as the Turkic and Hunnic peoples. These people migrated out of the steppes in waves most likely as early as 6000BCE (separation of Proto-Indo-European language from its parent Nostratic tongue). The expansion was almost certainly caused by the adoption of horse drawn wagons by the Indo-Europeans. This led to the use of chariots in war, and finally to riding horses for various purposes.



Image 1-Around 6000BCE beginning of Indo-European Migration



Around 4000BCE Indo-European migration toward South and North



3000BCE Indo-European Migration continues.



Around 3000BCE some started migrating eastwards. These people eventually integrated themselves into the Oxus Civilization and then supplied the migrants that entered India and Iran. These people are referred to as Indo-Iranian or Aryans. There is some evidence in names to show that people using a language which was related to Vedic and Avesta lived to the north of the black Sea; and various groups of Iranian nomads also occupied that area for a very long time. The group split into two related linguistic groups, one we call Iranian and the other Indian. In addition to living in the steppes they expanded into modern Afghanistan, Iran, India, Pakistan and the hill country of Syria and eastern Turkey. Along the way they integrated themselves into the Oxus Civilization around 2200-1700 BCE. Note: It is estimated that Zarathushtra lived around 1700BCE near Oxus River south of Aral Sea.

Key Concepts and Terms:

At the end of the lesson students should understand the following...

- **WHERE:** The part of the world we are studying. What/where are the modern-day countries that are there today.
- **WHEN:** Time period we are studying. When did these Zoroastrian Empires exist? There are many different calendars. What is BC/AD and BCE/CE?
- **WHAT:** What are some of the historical sources we have for knowing about what happened at this time. What are the pros and cons of these sources? Are there any biases?
- Migration from the Russian Steppes to the Iranian Plateau

Terms: BC/AD, BCE/CE, Indo-European

Lesson for students:

- 1) **Where** – Show world map and the region we are discussing.
 - a) Show world map: Ask if anyone knows where the Zoroastrian empires are?
 - b) Show a blank map of the area with country borders. Ask if anyone can identify them. This can be a class exercise or homework.
 - c) Who recognizes these places by their modern-day names?
 - d) Have you been to any of these places?
 - e) Have you learned about them in other classes?
- 2) **When** – When did these empires exist?
 - a) Show a timeline with each Zoroastrian empire mapped out. Have you heard of any of these before?
 - b) Show a larger timeline with other great empires (Egypt, China, Mayan etc.) for context.
 - c) Ask what the students have already learned about them.
 - d) Which calendar are we using? What do BC and AD mean? What are BCE and CE? What are some other calendars?



- 3) **Historical Sources** – How do we know what happened 2500 years ago? Discuss sources.
 - a) How do you think we know about this time? How do we know of historical events we learn about in school?
 - b) What kind of information can we learn from these different sources?
 - c) Do you think some sources are more accurate than others?
 - d) If there is bias, is it intentional?

- 4) **Human Migration to the Iranian Plateau** – Where did the people in the Iranian plateau come from?
 - a) Find the Russian Steppes and the Iranian Plateau on the map.
 - b) What was lifelike in each of these areas? Why? What was the land like?
 - c) Show how the people migrated? Did everyone migrate?

Activity for Students:

1. Share the provided blank map (or alike) of the Middle East and Central Asia and have the students name as many modern countries on the map as they can. Fill in the countries that students could not name with the class. Then have the student show the migration of Indo-European and Indo-Iranian people.
2. Give students examples of different dates and ask them to calculate the years in different contexts.
 - a. For example:
 - i. Some Zoroastrian organizations consider the year 3760 as the start of the Zoroastrian calendar (the time Zarathushtra lived). Calculate when Zarathushtra lived.
 - ii. Yazdegard III was coronated in 632AD, what is the AZ year?
 - iii. How many years ago is 535BCE?
 - b. When do you think should be the start of Zoroastrian year?
3. Share the Zoroastrian/Persian history timeline and have them calculate how long each empire lasted.
 - a. Which one was the longest lasting empire, which the shortest lasting one?
 - b. Pick an era and ask them to search and see what was going on in the rest of the world during that time.
4. Refer to Lesson 1 (Overall History) and have students use the timeline and find out what was happening in the world at the time of Zarathushtra’s birth, Aryan Migration, start of CE year, etc. and discuss as a class if they have been influential in what was happening in Iranian plateau.
5. Startup discussions. Some questions can include:
 - a. Why is learning history important?
 - b. What would students gain by studying the Iranian and Zoroastrian history?



- c. How would Indo-Europeans' possession of chariots and horses help them in their migration?
- d. Where did Zarathushtra's timeline fit in the Aryan Migration?

Sources:

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