



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): 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): 2

Subject of the Lesson: King Goshtasp and Prince Esfandiyar

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

One night, a saddened Esfandiyar came from his father's palace and went to his mother Katayun, the daughter of king of the Rum. He embraced her and said: "The king Goshtasp treats me badly. He told me that once I'd avenged the death of his father by killing King Arjasp, king of Touran, freed my sister from captivity, cleansed the world of evildoers and promoted our faith of Zoroastrianism, then he would hand over to me the throne and crown; I would be king and leader of armies. When he wakes up, I'm going to remind him of his words; he shouldn't keep me from what is rightfully mine. If I see any hesitation in his face, I'll place the crown on my own head and will make you the queen of Iran."

His mother's heart was saddened at his words. She knew that the king was in no hurry to hand over his crown, throne and country to his son. She said: "don't be so angry at your fate. The army and treasury are yours already. When Goshtasp dies, everything will be yours." But Esfandiyar was too angry to listen to his mother.

On the other hand, King Goshtasp was brooding on his son's ambitions for the crown and throne. King Goshtasp summoned his councilor Jamasp and had Esfandiyar's horoscope cast. Goshtasp asked whether the prince would have a long and happy life, reigning in safety and splendor, and if he would die at another's hand. Jamasp said: "Esfandiyar subdues lions, he has cleared Iran of its enemies, he is fearless in war, he has driven your foes from the face of the earth, he tears the dragon's body in two. But my king, misfortune will not hold back because of who he is. He will die in Zabulistan, fighting with Rostam." Goshtasp asked: "if I give him my treasury, throne and sovereignty, and if he never travels to Zabulistan, will he be safe from the turnings of fate?" Jamasp said: "what is fated will surely come to pass and a wise man does not ask when." The king grew pensive, and his thoughts made his soul like a tangled thicket. He brooded on the turning of fate, and his speculations turned him toward evil.

The next day, King Goshtasp sat on his throne and Esfandiyar stood humbly before him. The court was filled with famous warriors, and the priests stood ranged before the king. Then the mighty champion Esfandiyar spoke, and suffering was evident in his voice. He said: "Justice and love emanate from you. The crown and throne are made more splendid by you. I'm here to carry out all your desires. You know that in the wars of religion with Arjasp, who attacked us with the Chinese cavalry, I swore before God that I would destroy any idolater who threatened our faith. When Arjasp came, I did



not flee from the leopard’s lair. Drinking at your banquet you believed Gorazm’s slander and had me hanging with heavy chains and fettering in the fortress Gonbadan, despised among strangers. You abandon Balkh and travel to Zabol, thinking all battles were banquets and forgetting the sight of your father Lohrasp pierced by Arjasp’s sword, lying prone in his blood. When your councilor Jamasp came and saw me worn away by captivity, he tried to persuade me to accept the throne and Sovereignty. I answered that I would show my heavy chain to God on the day of judgment. He told me of my imprisoned sisters, of our king fleeing before the Turkish hordes and asked me if such a thing did not wring my heart. I did all you had commanded me, kept to all your orders, never swerved from your advice. You’d said if you ever saw me alive again you would cherish me more than your own wellbeing; that you would bestow the crown and ivory throne on me, because I would be worthy of both. What excuse do you have now? What’s the point of my life? What has all my suffering been for?”

The king answered his son: “you have acted as you say, and may God favor you for it. I see no enemies in all the world. No one in all the world is your equal, unless it be the foolish son of Zal, Rostam. He thinks of himself as no king’s subject. You must travel to Sistan and use all your skills. Bind Rostam in chain; do the same with Zavereh, Rostam’s brother, and Faramarz, Rostam’s son, and forbid them to ride in the saddle. I swear, you will hear no more opposition from me. I shall hand over to you my treasury, crown and I myself will seat you on the throne.”

Lesson for students:

The teacher will use the information in the “Background Knowledge for the Teacher” section to go over the story. After reading the first story to the students, the students can work on the activity listed below.

Activity for Students:

After reading, students will have a debate about who they felt was right: King Goshtasp or Prince Esfandiyar. Was King Goshtasp correct in keeping his son from the crown and throne because of his fate? Was Prince Esfandiyar correct in going after King Goshtasp to gain the crown and throne?

Students will also discuss the lesson/moral of this section of the story. They can also discuss where the characters might have made changes to their actions to change the events of the story.

Sources:

1. *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* retold by Elizabeth Laird
2. *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Kings* by Abolqasem Ferdowsi (Translated by Reuben Levy)

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