



## 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):** Lesson 2

**Subject of the Lesson:** The Champion Sam

### The Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

King Manuchehr ruled overall, but under him were many lesser kings in the far-flung empire. One of these was named Sam. He was the ruler of Zabulistan, and he was the strongest, bravest, and boldest warrior of all. He was known as the champion of the Great King. Whenever two armies were lined up against each other, Sam would be called forth to fight the enemy's strongest man in single combat.

Only one sorrow clouded Sam's life. He had no son. But, at last, the most beautiful of all his wives gave birth to a rosy-cheeked boy. This baby was unlike any other Iranian child, for his hair, which should have been a rich, glossy black, was as white and shining as the snow on the mountain tops.

At first, none of the women in Sam's household dared to tell the champion that his newborn son had the hair of an old man, but at last the baby's nursemaid braved his anger to bring him the news.

Sam stared scornfully down at his little son. Instead of love, he felt only anger and disappointment.

"He looks like the child of a demon!" he raged. "Anyone who sees him will laugh at me! I'll be forced to creep away in shame. Oh God, why have you punished me like this? What great sin have I committed?"

In the first flush of fury, ignoring the pleas of the baby's mother, he commanded his men to take the child far away to the mountain of Alborz and leave him there to die.

In that harsh and desolate place, where leopards roamed, a giant bird, the Simorgh, lived high up on a rocky crag. As her piercing eyes swept the valley floor, looking for prey on which to feed her chicks, she caught sight of the baby's fluttering hands.

She swooped down to snatch this promising morsel, but before her talons tore into his soft flesh, she saw how he was sucking his thumb and looking up at her with his huge, black eyes. Her motherly heart was touched. With great gentleness, she lifted him from the hot desert floor, and flew him up to her nest. She had no milk to feed him with, so he sucked the blood from the meat she gave to her chicks, who had accepted him as their brother.



In this way, Sam’s abandoned son grew from year to year into a magnificent young man, who could leap from crag to crag in the high mountains, his mane of white hair flying.

**Lesson for students:**

The teacher will use the information in the “Background Knowledge for the Teacher” section to go over the first 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 draw a picture of what they think Zal looked like and what they think the Simorgh looked like. Students will also discuss what they think the lesson/moral of this story is.

**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)

**Prepared by:** Mahnaz Behmardian and Tanaz Karai

**Edited by:** Tanaz Karai

**Date:** 4/2023