



## 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 3

**Subject of the Lesson:** Sam and Zal

### Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

One night, as Sam lay sleeping in his castle, he dreamed that a warrior rode out from India with news that his son was alive. Sam called for the wise men to interpret his dream.

They reproached him bitterly, "Even lions and crocodiles, and all the most ferocious wild animals, care for their children," they told him. "But you cast your son out to die in the mountains, only because of the color of his hair. And look! Your own hair has now turned as white as milk."

Sam wept tears of shame and begged God to forgive him. Then he saddled his horse, summoned his army, and rode to Mount Elburz, where long ago he had abandoned his son.

When he reached the place, he looked up to see a massive nest, high on a rocky pinnacle, with ebony branches that seemed to nestle among the stars.

"Who could climb to such a fearful height? Oh, Great God, will I never see my child again?" cried Sam, bowing so low in repentance that his face touched the ground. "Lord, help me to climb this cliff and find him!"

The Simorgh, looking down with her all-seeing eyes, saw her nestling's father, and understood at once why he had come.

"My dear child," she said to Sam's son. "Your father has come for you, and you must go back to the world of men."

The young man's eyes filled with tears. "How can I leave you?" he said to the giant bird. "Your nest is my home. You are the mother I love. I grew up sheltered under your wings."

But the Simorgh answered, "A great destiny is waiting for you. My heart breaks at the thought of losing you, but you must now go."

She pulled a feather from herself and gave it to him. "If you are ever in danger, burn this," she said, "and I will come at once to help you. And remember me, my child, as I will always remember you." She picked him up in her huge talons, swooped down the mountainside, and set the boy gently on the ground in front of his father.



Sam gazed in awe at the handsome young giant, with his bright black eyes and flowing white hair, who was as tall as a tree and as strong as an elephant.

He thanked Simorgh, who rose on her mighty wings and returned to her nest. Then he embraced his son and begged for his forgiveness.

“Now that I have found you,” he promised, “I will never be hard-hearted towards you again. For the rest of my life, I will make sure that every one of your wishes will be fulfilled.”

He named his son Zal.

Sam dressed Zal in a tunic of gold brocade and gave him an Arab horse to ride. But as they trotted away from that desert place, Zal turned back, fixing his eyes on the great nest and the mother bird roosting there, for as long as she was in sight.

### **Lesson for students:**

Teachers should begin the lesson by asking students what they remember about the first story. If students do not remember anything, review some key points about it. The teacher will use the information in the “Background Knowledge for the Teacher” section to go over the next story in the Shahnameh. After reading the rest of the story to the students, the students can work on the activity listed below.

### **Activity for Students:**

After reading the story, the students will complete a sentence sequence activity. In this activity, students will get a sentence or groups of sentences from the stories, “The Champion Sam” and “Sam and Zal”. The students will work together to try and put their sentences in the correct order.

### **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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