



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): 5

Subject of the Lesson: Faranak and Fereidun

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Abtin, a descendant of King Jamshid and his wife, Faranak had a baby boy by the name of Fereidun whose face shone like the sun.

Zahhak's men searched the world for a boy named Fereidun. They caught the child's father, Abtin, and killed him. But brave Faranak snatched up her little son and fled. "Where can I hide him?" she wondered. "Who can I find to look after him?"

Far away in the meadow, there lived a cow, named Barmayeh, of wonderful strength and beauty, whose hide was the color of peacock feathers and whose milk was fit for a hero to drink. Faranak hurried to find the cow as fast as she could. When she arrived, she begged the herdsman that took care of Barmayeh to hide her son and to let him drink the cow's milk, as if he was its own child. The man agreed. Faranak went to the village to work and provide for Fereidun.

Three years passed. Zahhak, who was filled with fear, was haunted by the thought of the child who would grow up to conquer him. All he could think of was the hidden child.

At last, Zahhak and his men heard about the herdsman and Barmayeh and knew that is where Fereidun must be. He sent his soldiers to capture the little boy, however, when they arrived, Fereidun was gone, only the herdsman and Barmayeh were left. Zahhak killed the herdsman and Barmayeh.

Faranak had heard of Zahhak's intention, and she raced to save her son. She reached him first and left with him to the sanctuary of a holy man, high up in the Alborz mountains. "My son is destined to be a great king," she told the holy man. "He will defeat the monster Zahhak, who is searching for him everywhere." Faranak asked him to help them to hide. The old man agreed.

By the time he was sixteen years old, Fereidun had become a noble young man of great height and strength. He kept asking his mother, Faranak, "Who am I?", "Who was my father? Why have you kept me in hiding all my life?"

Faranak told Fereidun about his past. "Your father was a good man, descended from noble kings. The evil Zahhak murdered him and fed his brains to the snakes which live on his shoulders. All your life, since the day of your birth, Zahhak has hunted you because of a dream that came to him long ago."



Fereidun was angry when he heard this. “Mother, bring my sword. I will kill this monster and avenge my father!” he shouted.

Faranak shook her head. “Not yet, my son. Zahhak is the ruler of the world and has vast armies to fight for him. What can one boy do against such an enemy? Wait, till the time is right.”

Lesson for students:

Teachers should begin the lesson by asking students what they remember about the previous 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 can complete a sentence sequence activity. In this activity, each student gets a sentence or groups of sentences from the story. The students will work together to try and put their sentences in the correct order of the story.

Sources:

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

Prepared by: Tanaz Karai and Mahnaz Behmardian

Edited by: Tanaz Karai

Date: 2021