



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 6

Subject of the Lesson: Birth of Rostam

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Rostam is one of the most beloved figures in Shahnameh. He embodies superhuman strength, courage, and endurance as well as complete loyalty to the kings of his beloved country Iran. Rostam was a true Pahlavan.

Shortly after Rudabeh and Zal got married, Rudabeh became pregnant. From the beginning, Rudabeh repeatedly complained to her mom, Sindokht, and her husband, Zal, how painful her pregnancy was and how she couldn't go to sleep or rest her body. By the end of her pregnancy, Rudabeh was in such agony that she was only crying. Then into Zal's memory a thought came which lightened his heart. He remembered Simorgh's feather. Joyfully, he burned one of Simorgh's feathers. In an instant, the air darkened and out of the gloom the great bird appeared, eager to serve.

Simorgh shockingly looked at Zal's face which was pale and covered with tears and grief. Simorgh said, your child will be born eager for fame. Lions will kiss the dust of his footsteps and above his head even the cloud will find no passage. He would have the grace of a cypress tree but the strength of an elephant and with one of his fingers, he would be able to break a brick into pieces. But the child will not come into existence by the ordinary way of birth. Simorgh asked for Poniard of tempered steel and a man of high skill to cut the flesh. Also, Simorgh told Zal of medicinal herbs to give Rudabeh to make her relax. Simorgh guided the skilled man on how to do the first Cesarean birth (According to Shahnameh, the first ever performed.) Medicinal herbs and Simorgh's feathers were put on Rudabeh's wound with an assurance that all would go well, the bird spread its wings and flew away. A baby boy, Rostam, was born. He was so big that looked like one year old.

One day, while still a child, Rostam had the opportunity to demonstrate his exceptional strength. When everyone else had failed, he hunted down and killed a white elephant that was rampaging through the palace grounds. He was a true Pahlavan throughout so many difficulties the country faced at that time.

The creed of the Pahlavan is to be pure, truthful, unpretentious, good tempered and only then strong in body. Pahlavans seek to develop the mind, body, and spirit. They engage in learning as well as physical strength. The pursuit of both learning and physical strength is preceded by modesty. Learn modesty if you desire knowledge.



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 will draw a picture of what they think Rustom looked like when he was born as well as when he was a child and killed the white elephant.

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

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