



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): 6

Subject of the Lesson: Zahhak and Kaveh, the Blacksmith

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Days and nights Zahhak couldn't rest or sleep. His fear of being captured by Feridun took away all his happiness.

Zahhak decided to gather all the princes who were ruling over his provinces and all the ministers to sign a proclamation that he was a commander in chief and that he had only spoken of truth and righteousness and never failed to maintain justice. They feared that they would lose their lives, so all men, old and young, willingly, or unwillingly agreed and signed what Zahhak asked them to do.

Just then an unexpected blacksmith, Kaveh, entered the palace screaming for justice. Zahhak became very anxious and didn't know what to say. No one had ever dared to enter his palace screaming for justice. Zahhak said to the blacksmith, "Tell me whose hands it is that you have suffered from." Bravely, Kaveh said, "Most of the wrongs done to me come from yourself. I had eighteen boys and now only one remains. I am a simple blacksmith, doing no wrong yet fire falls on my head from your majesty. Although you have a dragon's form, you are the king and it's your duty to let me have justice and give me back my only son left in this world."

Zahhak was astonished by Kaveh's request but granted him justice by returning his last son back to him. Then, Zahhak asked Kaveh to add his signature (testimony) to what was contained in the proclamation. When Kaveh read what was written, he got so upset of all the lies he read that he tore up the proclamation into pieces.

Kaveh and his son left the palace and went to the marketplace. He asked men to come to his aid and urged the world to demand justice. On the end of a spear, Kaveh fastened a piece of leather, which blacksmiths wear in front of their legs when using their hammers (later this was called Kaviani Banner). With the spear held high, Kaveh began to march, crying out as he went, "Noble worshipper of God, let all who side with Feridun liberate their heads from Zahhak. Let us go to Feridun and find refuge in the shelter of his FARR. Let us proclaim that this present king, Zahhak, is Ahriman."



As Kaveh was shouting these words, an army of ordinary people rallied with him. Kaveh knew where Feridun was and went directly towards his place. As they at last approached the place that Feridun lived, they greeted him with a shout when they saw him in the distance. Feridun along with his two older brothers saw the crowd and opened his heart, declaring that with the help of people, he would conquer the evil. He asked for a heavy mace (clublike armor) to be made for him that looked like a cow's head.

Kaviani Banner

The leather was decorated with a rich fabric with a raised pattern and a background that had a golden figure outlined with jewels sewn on it. Ribbons of red, yellow, and violet cloth were hung from it, and it was given the title of "The Kaviani Banner". Since that time, anyone who has assumed kingly rank has placed the crown of royalty on his head and added fresh jewels to that blacksmith's leather.

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 create their own Kaviani Banner.

Sources:

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

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Date: 2021