



### FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

**Subject Category (circle one):** Iranian Religion **Celebration** 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):**

**Subject of the Lesson:** Mehregan

**Background Knowledge for the Teacher:**

Why do we celebrate Mehregan?


#### 1. Seasonal- The Persian Thanksgiving:

Mehregan is an autumn celebration which marks the second part of the year, when summer ends and people prepare themselves for the harsh cold winter ahead. Mehregan was the day Persians gave their thanks and gratitude to Ahura Mazda for the plentiful harvest and food supply gathered during the summer which would provide them with sustenance during the harsh winter times. Like all other Persian celebrations, Mehregan had its own special rituals and preparations. According to historical documents and books, people used clothes, r new clothes mostly in purple. They would get together, exchange gifts.

#### What are the items on Mehregan sofreh (spread)?

The Mehregan celebration is never complete without the Mehregan’s colorful table which is traditionally set on a purple tablecloth and decorated with flowers and plants. The table include other items such as a copy of the Avesta book (the Zoroastrian religious text), a mirror along with edible goods such as: rosewater, sweets, dried fruits, nuts and seasonal fresh fruits such as pomegranates,



persimmons and apples. A (a burner  ) would also be included for burning frankincense (kondor) and wild rue (espan).

The household wears new clothes and gathers along this colorful sofreh at noon, and after praying, they would enjoy the yummy goods presented at Sofreh and a special delicious lunch which is usually a stuffed chicken.

#### 2. Monthly celebration: Day of Mehr and Month of Mehr (Mithra):

In ancient times, both Mehregan and Nowruz were two main celebrations conducted in similar manners. Before the Arab invasion 1400 years ago, the Zoroastrian calendar was the state calendar of



Iran and it is still being used by the Zoroastrians today. Each year consists of 12 months. Each month has a special name representing an Archangel known as Izadân starting with Farvardin and ending with Esfand. There are 30-days in every month. Similarly, every day is named either after an attribute of Ahura Mazda (the Ameshaspandân) or an Archangel known as Izadân. Whenever the month and the day share the same name, that day is considered auspicious, and it is celebrated.

According to the Zoroastrian calendar, the 16<sup>th</sup> day of each month and the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the year are named after Izad Mehr. As such Mehregan is celebrated annually on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Mehr when the month and the day share the name Mehr.

Note: Mithra is the god of light, contract, and promise. Avesta has a section dedicated to Mithra called Mehr Yasht.

### **3. Shahnameh- Legend of Feraydun, Zahhak & Kaveh Ahangar:**

According to the Shahnameh (“Book of Kings”, composed 977-1010 CE) a medieval epic written by the poet Abolqasem Ferdowsi (l. c. 940-1020 CE) in order to preserve the myths, legends, history, language, and culture of ancient Persia”). Long ago, there lived a tyrannical monarch, called Zahhak who got duped by the devil, to kill his father, seize power, and rule over Persia for a thousand years. This cruel king was once kissed on the shoulders by the devil where two monstrous snakes grew which needed to be fed by young men’s brains.

Having lost his sons to Zahhak’s serpents, Kaveh – a decent working-class blacksmith- decided to stand against this brutal tyrant and end his reign. All he had was a brave heart and the support of the people. Kaveh with Fereydoun’s help conquered Zahhak and Feraydun imprisoned Zahhak in Mount Damavand. This glorious victory happened on Mehregan day and from then on ancient Iranians celebrated this day magnificently every year.

For further information visit:

<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mehregan>

<https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/mehregan.htm>

#### **Lesson for Students:**

1. Ask the students: What do you know about Mehregan?
2. Tell the “Legend of Zahhak and Kaveh Ahangar”
3. Talk about Persian Thanksgiving and being thankful.
4. Talk about “Mehr and the Importance of Love, keeping promises, and light in Zoroastrianism.
5. Talk about Mehregan table and significance of the elements on the table.

**Watch video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaVg9CagO8E>

**Mehregan Song:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-m4l6x2fvM>



### **Activities:**

- 1) Have students write a paragraph about one of the questions below and then share with class.
  - a. Why do you think Mehregan was an important celebration for our ancestors and why is it still for us today?
  - b. In your opinion which of the three reasons for celebrating Mehregan is most important and why?
- 2) Act out the story of Feraydun, Kaveh and Zahhak and discuss important learning elements of the story.
  - a. Why did people tolerate Zahhak's unjust rule for so long?
  - b. How was Zahhak able to continue his rule?
  - c. What were the important traits that Kaveh and Feraydun possess?
  - d. How does this story relate to the teachings of Zarathushtra?
- 3) Make a Kahoot Game using Material for teacher to review the lesson with students.
- 4) Invite the students' families to set up a Mehregan table & celebrate.
- 5) Make a Bingo game about Mehregan.
  - a. Form questions from the Material for teacher section
  - b. Write the answers to the questions in part "a" on the bingo square sheet instead of numbers.
  - c. Put all the questions in a jar and have each student take turn, pull out a question, read it and everyone can put a bean on the square with the correct answer.

### **Sources:**

1. <https://www.w-z-o.org/mehregan-the-zoroastrian-celebration-of-autumn/>
2. <https://medium.com/doctoryak/mehregan-the-light-of-mithra-and-the-ancient-iranian-festival-of-autumn-cba11dd51bde>
3. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mehragan>
4. Shahnameh The Persian Book of Kings by Ferdowsi Translated by Dick Davis

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