



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian 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):

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 According to historical documents and books, people used to wear new clothes, mostly in purple. They would get together, and 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 16th day of each month and the 7th month of the year are named after Izad Mehr. As such Mehregan is celebrated annually on the 16th 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 Student:

1. Ask the students: What do you know about Mehregan?
2. Make a Power Point or present the different reasons why Mehregan is an important celebration for Zoroastrians and why it is celebrated.
 1. Seasonal
 1. Harvest time
 2. A time when our ancestors were financially secure.
 3. One of the last communal gatherings before the snow fall.
 4. A time of giving thanks and being grateful.
 2. Shahnameh
 1. Story of Fereydoun, Kaveh and Zahhak
 2. Victory of good vs evil
 3. This victory was achieved through courage and standing up to unjust rule
 3. Day of Mehr and Month of Mehr



4. Monthly Zoroastrian celebration

1. Importance of Mehr as a strong deity in pre-Zoroastrian times manifesting itself after Zarathushtra in form of Izad.

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

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

Activity:

- 1) Class discussion:
 - a. What did you learn about Mehregan?
 - b. Why gratitude is an important part of Mehregan?
 - c. How does Mehregan relate to Zoroastrianism?
- 2) Break students into groups and have each group discuss amongst themselves and then present to class the following topics:
 - a. Among all three reasons we celebrate Mehregan which one do you think has the strongest influence making Mehregan an important celebration and why?
 - b. What is the significance of the items on Mehregan spread? If you were going to add something to the spread, what would it be and why?
 - c. Why do you think people chose Zahhak to be the king of Iran and why it took them so long to choose a good leader? Do you see anything similar in today's world?
 - d. Why do you think Mithra was such an important deity in ancient times?
- 3) Plan a Mehregan celebration at your center.
- 4) Invite the students' families to set up a Mehregan table then have students have a presentation for parents about why we celebrate Mehregan and its significance.
- 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.
- 6) Make a Kahoot game from Material for teacher section.

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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