



## 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:** Prime Principles of Life

**Background Knowledge for the Teacher:**

Meaning of Amesha Spenta and its place in the Gathas and Avesta:

The word Amesha Spenta is comprised of two words, Amesha meaning deathless and Spenta meaning furthering, strengthening, bounteous, holy, sacred (those who exert their powers to further the good creation).

The word Amesha Spenta has **not** been mentioned in the Gathas.

The first recorded occurrence of the expression, with the elements inverted, is in the ancient *Yasna Haptanhāiti* (Y. 39.3): "So then we worship the good beings, male and female, the Spənta Aməšas, ever-living, ever-benefiting, who hold by good purpose." In the Zoroastrian creed, the *Fravarānē*, the believer declares: "I profess myself a Mazdā-worshiper, a Zoroastrian, rejecting the *daēvas* . . . one who praises the Aməša Spəntas, 2

Zarathushtra uses some twenty abstract terms to prescribe the way of promoting mental and physical faculties of soul to achieve perfection and immortality. He calls them "the primal divine laws of life." They are described as "divine names" in Haptanghaiti, the "Seven Sections" in the Gathic dialect. In the Farvardin Yasht, it is "the progressive thought-provoking message, the very spirit of God," which gives these abstracts "beautiful, active forms," and God the Creator is their "guardian and guide." The context of the Gathas shows them as divine emanations, which are sometimes poetically personified. They are the universal laws of nature, the natural way of living (AA Jafarey).

The concepts below are those more commonly mentioned in the Gathas.

**Spenta Mainyu**, the progressive mentality stands for the creative faculty of God. It creates, sustains, and promotes the creation. It leads to perfection and immortality (AA Jafarey). It is the bountiful or progressive spirit (DJ Irani).

**Vohu manah**, the good mind is the source of all that is good and wise. It was through his own good mind that Zarathushtra discovered, understood, and reached the Godhead. Good mind leads to refined



speech, which, in turn, turns into noble actions. Zarathushtra's doctrine rests on three pillars--*Humata, Hûkhta, Hvarshta*--Good thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds. Good mind helps one to discriminate between good and bad. It defines the sources of happiness and sorrow. In fact, it is the bliss some call "heaven." (Jafarey) The Good Mind is the mental capacity to comprehend Asha and the instrument of moral cognition. (DJ Irani).

### **Asha Vahishta**

Asha or *arta* is the old Indo-Iranian law of "truth, precision, righteousness" that governs the universe--sun, moon, earth, seasons, and all. It is precision and order in the universe that points to the Creator, Maintainer, and Promoter. It has been enacted to maintain the creation. It is the road to perfection. In human society, *asha* is the right thing, done at the right time and right place, and with the right means to obtain the right result. This promotes society to perfection. It ensures justice for all. It safeguards the rights of every member of society. It provides every individual with what he or she has contributed to society. Asha in a society sees that neither the society nor any individual exploits any person. And, above all, *asha* gives freedom of thought, word, and deed to every member (AA Jafarey).

Asha Vahishta is the Highest (Best) Truth, also the Highest form of Righteousness. This Truth describes how the World ought to be in its ideal form. Consequently, the intention to actualize it is Righteous Intention, and action according to it the highest form of Righteousness (DJ Irani).

### **Khshathra Vairya**

*Khshathra*--Good mind, precision and other principles create perfect order. Zarathushtra calls it *khshathra*. It means sovereignty, rule, settlement, and dwelling. It is the "desired," the "good," and the "chosen" government of the righteous, yet it belongs to God. It is the "ideal" order on the earth established by human beings who are wise, enlightened, experienced, sincere, and above all devoted to the promotion of the living world (AA Jafarey).

Khshathra-Vairya is the Ideal Dominion. It is the ideal social (and political) structure of the human world. In human terms, we may call it the ideal society. In theological terms, it is the Kingdom of Heaven (DJ Irani).

**Âramaiti**, serenity and tranquility, thrives under a good order. A tranquil order promotes health and happiness, and mind and body grow together evolving to *Hauvatat* (AA Jafarey). *Spenta Armaity* is the Holy Attitude. Theologically, it is the attitude of Piety toward the Source of Being and the Ultimate Truth; Ethically, it is the attitude of Benevolence, a concern for the Good. It may be characterized as Right-mindedness (DJ Irani).



### ***Haurvatat and Ameretat***

*Haurvatât*, wholeness, perfection. Evolution to wholeness means continuity, and continuity stands for immortality--*ameretât*. Wholeness and immortality make human beings **godlike** and make them live in eternal bliss, the ultimate goal of the Zarathushtrian doctrine (AA Jafarey).

*Haurvatat* is the state of complete Well-being, physical and spiritual integrity. In its full form it is a state of perfection on earth. *Ameretat* is the state of Immortal Bliss. (DJ Irani).

***Ushta*** is true happiness that radiates happiness to others without any discrimination, social or otherwise (AA Jafarey).

Zarathushtra uses more principles among abstract qualities that could help mankind to make the world an ideal place to live in peace and harmony with every living being, and to achieve the divine eternity ordained by God (AA Jaffarey).

### **Lesson for students:**

Goal: To understand that doing what is right (Asha) is one of the important principals in Zoroastrianism.

1. Present the concept of Asha in the context of doing the right thing. This can be accomplished through a story. We can represent Asha in many situations such as:
  - a. Helping someone in need.
  - b. Doing something for the good of the community or group of friends.
  - c. Being truthful and not lying (don't be deceitful).  
EX1: Honesty is my Superpower by Alicia Ortego with the YouTube link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z-Ads5yRAs>  
EX2: Tell them the story of "Choopan e Doroghoo", the shepherd who cried wolf.
  - d. Water a plant or help an animal in need.

### **Activity for Students:**

1. Have them color a picture that pertains to the subject matter you have presented for students to understand Asha.
2. Virtual and in-person: Sing Ashem Vohu together and tell students that the meaning of Ashem Vohu is: doing the right thing will bring happiness.
3. Plant flowers in the center's garden with the kids.
4. In a virtual setting, send them a pdf of a coloring sheet pertaining to the lesson before the day of the class. Have them color it and then share it with the class on Zoom while explaining how it relates to the day's lesson.



**Sources:**

1. [www.zoroastrian.org](http://www.zoroastrian.org)
2. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/amesa-spenta-beneficent-divinity>
3. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/armaiti>
4. Understanding the Gathas. The Hymns of Zarathushtra by Dinshaw J. Irani

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