



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: Saoshyant and Frashokereti

Background Knowledge for Teacher:

Goal: The goal of this lesson is to emphasize that each one of us needs to play a part in making this life excellent for all. Each one of us can be a Saoshyant or a benefactor.

Introduction:

The concept of Saoshyant (benefactor) and Frashokereti (making life excellent) has changed over time from what Zarathushtra presents in the Gathas to that of the later texts. It is important for students to understand the concepts as depicted in the Gathas. The high school students should also learn about the myths to increase their knowledge and understanding about the teachings of Zarathushtra and how it has changed form in later centuries.

Saoshyant:

Saoshyant in the Gathas:

Saoshyant in the Zoroastrian belief is a person who is the benefactor, helper or the one who makes this world a better place.

“Saoshyant” is derived from the Old Indian root word “su” meaning “to swell”. In Old Indian the verb has a semantic range “to swell, be strong, increase, prosper.” In Avestan corresponds *sūra-* (OInd. *śūra-*) “strong,” *yawaēsū-* “ever thriving.” The term in Zoroastrianism is sometimes rendered as “savior” (Bartholomae). This approximation of the meaning, in eschatological contexts only, has the disadvantage of associations with Christian theology. Since the term also occurs frequently in reference to contemporary individuals, including Zoroaster, a more neutral translation such as “benefactor” (e.g., Darmesteter; Humbach and Faiss) or “helper” (Lommel) may be preferred. However, there is a further semantic development, “to be of use, profit, advantage” (intransitive), and “to create profit, use, advantage, to further” (transitive). It is in this latter semantic range that the Zoroastrian tradition understood the meaning.²

In the Gathas, the word Saoshyant is used six times.

Ashu Zartosht for the first time introduces the word “Saoshyant” in the Gathas and announces himself to be one. (Refer to Gatha verses 34-13,45-11,48-12,53-2,46-3,48-9)



Ashu Zartosht also names three of his close friends and followers “Saoshyant”. These three are:

- Maidyumah (his cousin)
- King Goshtasp (the first king who became a follower of Ashu Zartosht and helped him spread his teachings)
- Jamasp (his son-in law)

In the Gathas, the term Saoshyant has been presented as singular, plural, in present and future context. That is any person or persons who is a benefactor in the present, or the future is a Saoshyant (within the context of the meaning of the term, we can consider those benefactors who came before Zarathushtra as Saoshyant as well).

According to the teachings in the Gathas a person can reach the highest level of being by following the attributes of Ahura Mazda which are also known as the Amesha Spentas.

Ahura Mazda’s attributes are:

- 1) Asha (righteousness)
- 2) Vohu Mana (good mind)
- 3) Khshathra (dominance of self)
- 4) Armaiti (love, faith, serenity)
- 5) Haurvatat (progression, completion)
- 6) Ameretat (immortality, becoming one with the Creator).
- 7) Spenta Mainyu (progressive mentality)

Who is a Saoshyant?

Any individual can become a “Saoshyant” by promoting and defending righteousness and improving the world.

According to Ashu Zarathushtra, a saoshyant is anyone who is:

1. Wise
2. Responsible and faithful
3. Courageous and opposes suffering.
4. Generous and promoter of kindness
5. Helps humanity.

Following the path of righteousness (Asha), the benefactor can set the world free from Druj (the cause of suffering through anger, greed, fear...) and bring peace and harmony.



What makes Zarathushtra's teachings modern and beautiful is that anyone can become a Saoshyant. This title does not necessarily belong to a superhero.

Later Texts (Myths about Saoshyant):

In the later Avestan texts due to our ancestors' hardships, we come across mythical heroes who were believed to appear in the future to rescue humanity at the time of turmoil or apocalypse. These stories and beliefs provided hope and a sense of security for its followers.

The stories in the Avesta state that:

- The first mythical savior appears 1000 years after Zarathushtra who will help with the spread of righteousness.
- The second mythical savior appears 1000 years after that who will promote the power of prayers.
- The third mythical savior appears 1000 years after the second one who will renew and improve the world.

According to Bundahishn (chapters 33,34), a text written in late Sassanid Era, more than two thousand years after Zarathushtra, the last savior and his helpers will bring in Frashgird (Frashgird is the Pahlavi word for Frashokereti in Avestan meaning "to make life excellent") with the resurrection of the dead and all will become immortal.

Frashokereti:

In the Gathas:

Ferashem kar (Yasna 30.9) meaning "to make (life) excellent". The Gathic adjective ferasha, functions as an attribute to ahu, "life"

"and so may we be among those for you who will make this life excellent" (Yasna 30.9)

Yasna 30.9 indicates clearly that there is in the Gathas a concept of "making life frasha". This is achieved by "giving falsehood into the hand of truth" (Yasna 30.8) an idea which forms the central semantic component of frashokereti (Frashgird in Pahlavi) in the later tradition.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra and his followers ("we" Yasna 30.9) bring about the renovation. Being Saoshyant, they fight and defeat Evil (Yasna 48.12). This indicates that falsehood can be defeated within one's own lifetime. It is their present life that they want to make excellent.

Therefore, in the Gathas, frashem kar is an act that defeats evil, brings renovation of life, and makes life excellent. This can be achieved by choosing righteousness and truth. The person who fights injustice, stands for truth, and Asha in short is a Saoshyant and brings about frashem kar.



Making life *frasha* or excellent is not the work of one person but all of us.

Later Texts:

In the later texts and later tradition *frashokereti* can be found in *Zamyad Yasht* (Yasht 19) with the arrival of each of the three *Saoshyant*.

It is clearly indicated what making life *fraša*- implies: it will become “ageless, without decay, not rotting, not putrefying, living forever, thriving forever, ruling at will” (Yt. 19.11.89). The dead will rise, revived by the one who does not decay, and life will be created anew in an excellent and perfect way. Falsehood will be driven out of the good creation, back to that place whence it had come for its destructive purpose (Yt. 19.12.90).²

The concept of a “savior” also exists in many religions. The followers of these faiths have been promised a hero who will emerge to rescue them and bring peace and unity to the world.

In the Zoroastrian belief we learn that each one of us can be the “*Saoshyant*” or the benefactor to make life excellent.

Lesson for student and activity sections are combined.

There is a suggested lesson for virtual and one for in-person instruction:

Virtual Lesson:

Lesson Plan: *Saoshyant* - Everyday Heroes (Virtual Adaptation)

Objective:

By the end of the lesson, students will understand that a *Saoshyant* is like an everyday hero who helps others and makes the world a better place. They will identify and depict simple ways they can be helpers in their daily lives.

Materials:

- Digital slides with pictures of everyday heroes (e.g., a teacher, firefighter, parent, doctor).
- Virtual drawing tools (google Jamboard, or have students use paper and crayons at home).
- A link to an "[Everyday Heroes](#)" song on YouTube or another platform.

Introduction (5 minutes):

- Ask students if they have a favorite superhero. Let them type in the chat or raise their virtual hand to share.



- Transition by saying, "Today, we're going to learn about real heroes that might even be in our home or neighborhood!"

Presentation (10 minutes):

1. Share your screen and show the digital slides. Discuss each everyday hero.
2. Emphasize the good deeds they do and introduce the word "Saoshyant."
3. Explain that long ago, people used this word to talk about people who do good things for others.

Activity (10 minutes):

1. If using a virtual drawing tool like Jamboard:
 - Share the link and guide students to draw themselves doing something helpful.
2. If students are using paper and crayons:
 - Ask them to draw and then hold up their drawing to the camera to share.
3. Encourage students to describe their drawing. You can allow them to unmute one by one or type in the chat.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

1. Share the link to the "[Everyday Heroes](#)" song and play it. Encourage students to sing along if they can.

[Everyday Hero | Signing Time | Two Little Hands TV - YouTube](#)

2. Explain that when they do kind and helpful things, they're being like the Saoshyant or an everyday hero.
3. As a fun ending, you can take a screenshot or a virtual group photo with all the students' drawings or with them wearing DIY paper crowns if they made them.

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In person Lesson:

The lesson introduces the concept of Saoshyant in a very basic way, tying it to the idea of everyday heroes, which is a more familiar and tangible concept for younger students. The activities focus on visual and auditory learning.

Lesson Plan: Saoshyant - Everyday Heroes

Objective: By the end of the lesson, students will understand that a Saoshyant is like an everyday hero who helps others and makes the world a better place. They will be able to identify and depict simple ways they can be helpers in their daily lives.



Materials:

- Large, illustrated book or poster with pictures of everyday heroes (e.g., a teacher, firefighter, parent, doctor).
- Drawing paper and crayons or colored pencils.
- Small paper crowns (one for each student).
- "Everyday Heroes" song (simple tune that talks about helping and kindness).

Introduction (5 minutes):

- Ask students if they have a favorite superhero. Let a few students share.
- Transition by saying, "Today, we're going to learn about real heroes that might even be in our classroom or home!"

Presentation (10 minutes):

1. Show the illustrated book or poster and discuss each everyday hero.
2. As you talk about each hero, emphasize the good deeds they do (e.g., "Doctors help us when we are sick," "Teachers help us learn," "Parents care for us").
3. Introduce the word "Saoshyant" as another word for these everyday heroes. Explain that long ago, people used this word to talk about people who do good things for others.

Activity (10 minutes):

1. Hand out drawing paper and crayons. Ask each student to draw themselves doing something helpful for someone else. It could be helping a friend, watering a plant, or giving a hug.
2. Once they've finished their drawing, ask a few volunteers to share their drawing and describe the helpful action they've depicted.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

1. Gather the students in a circle and hand out the small crowns.
2. Explain that when they do kind and helpful things, they are being like the Saoshyant or an everyday hero.
3. Let them wear the crowns and sing the "Everyday Heroes" song together, emphasizing the actions of helping and kindness.
4. As they leave, remind them that they can be everyday heroes by helping and being kind.



Sources:

1. Amoozesh din Zarthoshti, pishrafte 2, Zoroastrian Assembly of Tehran 1399
2. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/saosyant>
3. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/frasokrti>

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