



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian Religion/Ceremony 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: Wedding Ceremony

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Note to the teacher: The material presented in this lesson is geared to a modern-day Iranian Zoroastrian wedding outside Iran. For a more traditional wedding please look at the following:

Traditional Yazdi Wedding:

<https://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/marriage/iranian/index.htm>

Modern Yazdi wedding:

<https://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/marriage/iranian/page2.htm>

What is the purpose of marriage and marriage ceremony?

In modern times, the purpose of marriage has changed due to increase in gender equality and job opportunities for both men and women. In addition, society has begun to accept couples having children without going through a legal marriage. However, still a good number of couples choose to go through marriage and marriage ceremony.

Some of these reasons include:

1. Strong religious beliefs associated with marriage for the purpose of living together and having children.
 - a. In some religions it is considered a sin to live together and have children if unmarried.
 - b. In the Gathas, Yasna 53, Zarathushtra talks to the newly brides and grooms and to his youngest daughter Pouruchista who is getting ready to be married. However, there is no indication of sin in the Gathas associated with couples living together or starting a family without a legal marriage.
 - c. Children can be an important part of a union as they often uplift the status of the couple as a complete family. Many couples marry because they want to have children.
2. Happiness, respect, commitment, and working toward common goals.
 - a. Couples who have the same goals in life and think alike can work together to achieve their common goals by uplifting and supporting one another financially and emotionally.



- b. Through mutual support, respect, and the commitment that they have made to one another, couples can gain a shared family happiness.
 - c. Although marriage is not a requirement to have a commitment, respect, and work toward happiness with someone but like anything else a declared commitment acts as a reminder to ground us and give perspective.
3. Growth as a couple
Everyone changes and grows emotionally over time. Couples who stay together can grow together and help one another to improve.
 4. Enjoyment in one's relationship
One key reason for marriage is enjoyment in the relationship and all the moments of a shared life. This enjoyment comes with honesty, righteousness and using a good mind.
 5. Protection
Protection through different levels and stages of life is one of the main benefits of marriage. This protection is not just between couples but extends to the children and families.

Marriage in the Gathas:

- a. Yasna 53-3 (Song 17-3)
Zarathushtra advises his daughter Pouruchista to choose her partner wisely, to choose someone who is in tune with good mind and righteousness, to seek one another's consult with wisdom, an open mind and calm state of being.
Pouruchista Haechataspa Spitama, youngest daughter of Zarathushtra:
May He grant you him who is steadfast in good mind and united with righteousness and with the Wise One. Therefore, consult him with your wisdom and work with the most progressive and munificent serenity.
- b. Yasna 53-4 (Song 17-4)
In the Gathas the union of couples effect not only the couple, their immediate family but the community as well. This is because a union decided with wisdom and good mind brings gain that extends to the community. It is important to note that Pouruchista chooses her own husband out of free will. She says:

(She replies:) Him I shall emulate and choose,
an act which will be an honor
for the father, the husband, the settlers, and the family.
As a righteous woman among the righteous people,
mine be the glorious union of good mind.
May the Wise God grant it
for the Good Conscience for all the time.



c. Yasna 53-5 (Song 17-5):

Zarathushtra gives advice to the brides and bridegrooms:

(Zarathushtra says) These words I speak to the charming brides,
and to you, bridegrooms. Do bear them in mind.
Comprehend them with your consciences.
Master the life which belongs to good mind.
May you each win the other through righteousness.
It will, indeed, be a good acquisition for each of you.

d. Yasna 53-6 (Song 17-6)

Zarathushtra advises against falling into the trap of wrongdoing.

men and women, it is true that
wrong is attractive and appears to have advantages.
But it alienates one away from one's self.
It ends in woefulness and bad reputation.
It destroys happiness for the wrongful. It defiles truths.
With these, you shall be destroying your mental life.

e. Yasna 53-7 (Song 17-7)

Zarathushtra advises the brides and bridegrooms to remember their commitment to one another in times of doubt.

But the reward of this Fellowship shall be yours
as long as you remain united in weal and woe
with all your heart in wedlock.
Thus the mentality of the wrongful disappears.
However, if you abandon the Fellowship,
then the last word you shall utter is "woe."

Summary of marriage in the Gathas:

Approach your partner with kindness and understanding
Consult one another when calm and can think clearly (wisdom, serenity, and devotion)
Be righteous toward one another, family, and community
When tempted to do wrong, remember your commitment to one another.
Stay united in good and bad times
Work toward improvement in relationships and other aspects of life.



Marriage ceremony:

1. Once couples meet, see happiness in a united life with one another, share love and have mutual goals and compatibility, they decide to celebrate this union with family and friends.
2. Khastegary (asking permission/blessing of the marriage from the bride's parents)
 - a. This is when the groom's family plan a day to visit the bride's home for an official declaration of their mutual decision and ask for the bride's parents' permission/blessing of the union.
 - b. On this day, gifts are exchanged, sweets eaten and leaves from sarv (cypress tree) is exchanged between family members usually accompanied with noghl (sugar covered almond) or kaleh ghand (sugar cone) and usually a gift.
3. Wedding ceremony
 - a. Couples may want to celebrate this special day differently depending on their taste. Some may prefer a small nuclear family affair, and others may prefer a big wedding.
 - b. Sofreh Gavah (the wedding vows spread)
 - i. Just as any other Zoroastrian spread, the representation of the 7 Amesha Spentas will be present in addition to other items special for this day.
 1. A metal dish or needle (metal representative of Khshathra Vairya)
 2. Candles will be lit (representative of Asha Vahishta)
 3. Egg (representative of Vohu Mana)
 4. Water (representative of Haurvatat)
 5. Evergreen or cypress leaves (representative of Ameretat)
 6. Gatha or Avesta book (representative of Spenta Mainyu)
 7. The white or green tablecloth (representative of Spenta Armaiti)
 8. In addition to the above, mirror, rose water, flowers, sweets, noghl mixed in or on top of Ajeel (similar to lork- lork is dried untoasted nuts whereas ajeel is toasted and salted nuts accompanied by sweet, dried fruits), lit esfand, and Kaleh ghand wrapped in green covering (sugar cone). Some put needle and thread (as a symbol of bringing the couple back together during difficult times) and scissors (as a symbol of two blades working as one to accomplish a task).
 - c. The Gavah (marriage vows)
 - i. The couple walk down the aisle together.
 - ii. Usually Mobed, Mobedyar, or another officiant will be waiting at the wedding spread to greet the couple and perform the marriage ceremony.
 - iii. The couples' mother and father (if they are not present the couple may choose an aunt, uncle, or someone whom they consider an important person in their lives after their parents) will sit at the spread with the couple as a sign of unity.



- iv. The Mobed will ask the couple if they are willing to enter wedlock. The bride and groom answer yes (the bride may say yes after the third time Mobed repeats the question). Then the Mobed wishes them a good, prosperous, and happy life. He will go on to give the couple advice such as being righteous, remembering Ahura Mazda, and not to forget Zoroastrian ceremonies and celebrations. In addition, he/she will ask them to choose a day during the month when the couple will give donation. He will go on to ask each to choose one person whom they will go to for advice. Mobed will go on and gives the couple advice to protect the environment, animals, be benevolent, support one another and work toward betterment of their spiritual and material lives.
- v. The Mobed then will ask the bride and groom once again if they are willing to be joined in marriage.
- vi. The ceremony will end with Mobed reciting certain prayers and at the end the community cheer in joy by shouting “haubeero”.
- vii. The wedding ceremony will continue with food, music, dancing, and a joyous time.

Note: For more details, please refer to #3 of the resources section.

Lesson for students:

1. Ask students why couples get married.
2. What are the benefits of marriage?
3. What do they think our religion teaches about marriage?
4. Make a Power Point of the lesson and share with students.

Activity for Students:

1. Break the class into groups and have them look at the Gatha verses pertaining to marriage (Yasna 53 verses 3-7) then have each group share with class their understanding of marriage and ways to have a happy family? Make sure to fill in or emphasize the important points after each presentation.
2. Considering Yasna 53 verses 3-7, what do you think are our religion’s views on same sex marriage?
3. Considering Yasna 53 verses 3-7, what are our religion’s views on couples starting a family together without a legal marriage?
4. The Mobed asks the couple at the beginning of Gavah if they are willing to enter a wedlock and then at the end, he asks them again. Why?



5. What are the differences and similarities between a Zoroastrian marriage and marriage in other religions that you have witnessed or are familiar with?
6. Break the class into groups and give each group a poster board. Have each group draw or illustrate a design that represents the important points in Yasna 53 verses 3-7. You can bring appropriate newspaper clippings for students to glue on their poster emphasizing the important points.
7. Present students with some common marital problems and ask them how they would find solutions for those problems considering Yasna 53 verses 3-7
 - a. EX. Money: Financial problems, one spouse being less than honest about how they are spending money (loss of trust).
 - b. EX. Parenting differences: different parenting styles can create conflict and friction between couples.
 - c. EX. Household division of labor: one doing most of the work in the house while the other doesn't contribute as much.

Sources:

1. <https://www.marriage.com/advice/relationship/what-is-the-point-of-marriage/>
2. Gathas Our Guide translated by AA Jafarey
3. <https://zoroastrians.net/2013/09/10/marriage-ceremony-as-performed-in-iran-for-zarthushti-couples/>
4. <https://wellin5.ca/7-of-the-most-common-marital-problems/>

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