



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): **Parsi 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**

Subject of the Lesson: Yazatas

Background Knowledge for Teacher:

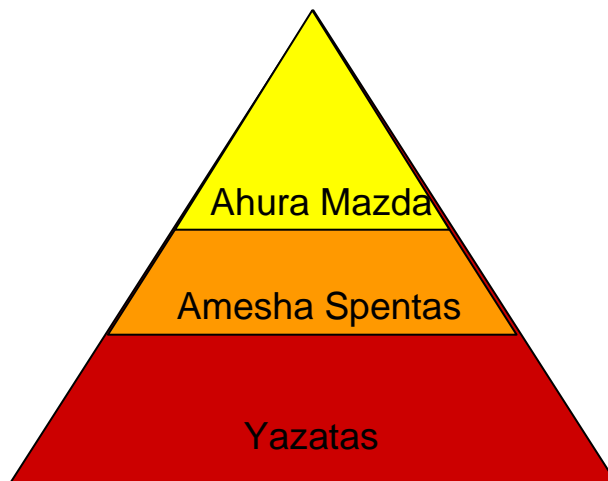
The Yazatas are helpers of Ahura Mazda who are special beings worthy of deep reverence. There are 33 Yazatas in total, with 30 of the Yazatas linked to the 30 days of the calendar and the remaining 3 Yazatas are Dahm (yazata of blessings), Hom (yazata of good health) and Burj/Barjor (yazata of water).

It is believed that many Yazatas have the ability to heal, take care of the creations and grant wishes.

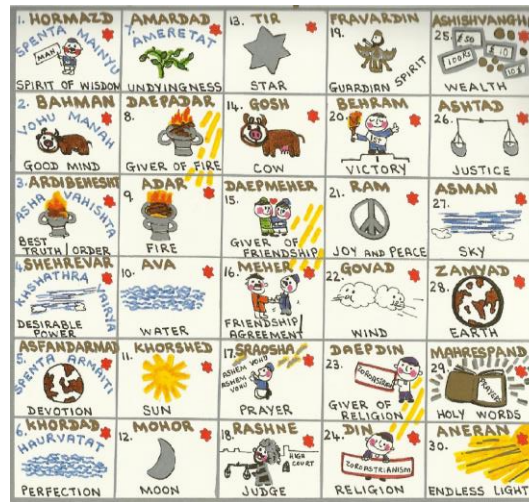
The first seven days of the calendar and their Yazatas are linked to the seven Amesha Spentas:

- Hormazd - is linked to Dae pa Adar, Dae pa Mehr, Dae pa Din
- Bahman - is linked to Mohor, Gosh, Ram
- Ardibehsht - is linked to Adar, Sarosh, Behram
- Shehrevan - is linked to Khorshed, Mehr, Asman, Aneran
- Asfandarmad - is linked to Ava, Din, Ashishvangh, Mahrespand
- Khordad - is linked to Tir, Fravadin and Govad
- Amardad - is linked to Rashne, Ashtad, Zamyad

The 33 Yazatas along with the 7 Amesha Spentas aid Ahura Mazda in taking care of the creations and the physical world (see diagram below). Each yazata represents a specific principle to help Zoroastrians lead a good life.



The principle/meaning behind each yazata can be found in the calendar image below:



Ref: The Story of our Religion Zoroastrianism by Ava Mehta

Suggested Material:

1. 30-day calendar

Vocabulary: Yazata; Humkar; Humakara, Parab (the day the roj and month coincide) ; Ghambar; Names of the Yazatas

Lesson for students:

1. Explain what is a Yazata (see triangular diagram above) in comparison to Ahura Mazda and Amesha Spentas. Compare the yazatas to the law enforcement branch of the government. Legislators and Judiciary make the laws in a country, while the executive, police, army, navy, etc. execute and enforce these laws. Similarly, yazatas are spiritual entities that assist humans in executing God's will which is to live interdependently with nature and to protect and preserve creatures and the Earth.
1. Relate Yazatas to calendar and discuss how each yazata might symbolize a different creation that needs to be conserved while also representing a spiritual force that can assist man in that effort.
2. Discuss different Yazatas: for example, Behram, Sarosh, Meher, Avan, Adar, Tir, Khorshed, Asfandarmad as described above. Break students into groups and ask them to research each of the above mentioned yazatas along with stories that might be associated with them such as the Mushkil Assan story associated with Behram Yazad. Ask them to create a presentation to educate the class about their yazata.



4. Introducing the connection between our prayers to some of the Yazatas, such as:

- Hormazd Yasht - for seeking divine knowledge and energy
- Ardibehesht Yasht for the fire and good health
- Asfandarmad Nirang for the earth
- Khorshed or Meher Yasht for the sun
- Avan Yasht - for the waters, for good health of women, fertility and pregnancy
- Tir Yasht - for rain
- Behram Yasht - for victory
- Sarosh Yasht Hadokht and Sarosh Yasht Vadi - commonly prayed when someone passes away
- Fravadin Yasht - for the fravashis and departed souls

5. Introducing the connection between the Yazatas and the Niyaeshs:

- Khorshed Niyaesh for the sun
- Mehr Niyaesh for the rays of the sun
- Mah Bakhtar Niyaesh for the moon
- Avan Ardivisur Niyaesh for the waters
- Atash Niyaesh for the fire

6. Which Yazatas are related to each other (for example Adar/ Ardibehsht/ Khorshed/ Dae pa Adar)

Activity for Students:

1. Discussion topic: How do you live your life based on the principles of the Yazatas?
2. Discuss why Yazatas are such an important concept in our religion at a logical level. They appear in our prayers, our philosophy of life, and even in our common idioms (like Sarosh Yazad Panah bad).
 - a. What are the challenges that most high school students deal with? What coping strategies work best for them?
 - b. Remind them that Zoroastrians through the ages have invoked the yazatas in time of need. Why do they do so? (Not because they are meant to miraculously solve all problems but because it gives time to pause, clear the mind, contemplate deeply before jumping to a solution). How many of them meditate or take time to reflect and breathe through their day? Would it help to have something like a yazata to anchor themselves with in times of difficulty?
 - c. Normalize the concept of help-seeking especially in this age of mental health concerns that so many young individuals have. In the same way that they should be reaching out to individuals who can help them – parents, teachers, counsellors – they can reach out to yazatas for spiritual and practical strength and wisdom (And it is ok to have a favorite one 😊).



- d. Discuss popular adages connected to the Yazatas when meditating:
 - a. *Sarosh Yazad Panah bad* – May Sarosh Yazad protect you
 - b. *Ardvi Sur Anahita beresad* – Blessings of the water (for healing, women’s health)
 - c. *Mah Bokhtar Nyaish, Mah Bokhtar beresad* – Blessings of the moon for protection
 - d. *Ashaunam vanguish surao spentao fravashayo yazamaide* – we revere the righteous, good, powerful beneficent fravashis
 - e. *Behram Yazad mushkil asaan* – May Behram Yazad ease/reduce your troubles

3. Amesha Spentas and their helpers the Yazatas Quiz Game

Quiz Game Instruction:

- The teacher must first download this PowerPoint game and store it on his/her personal computer.
- Put the PPT in “present” or “Slide Show” mode and review all the sections – 7 Amesha Spentas and their *helpers* Yazatas.
- Click “from beginning” from the top menu bar.
- Click ‘next’ and the images go gray. The sequence is anti-clockwise.
- Begin asking questions from the Pictorial Calendar – in the anti-clockwise sequence.
 - Q. – Which Amshaspand (Amesha Spenta) is for *Spirit of Wisdom*
 - – Hormuzd
- If a student gives an incorrect answer and you click on the incorrect section, the correct section will come up – e.g. Instead of a student saying Hormuzd he/she says Ardibehesht, when you click on the slide the correct section will open up.
 - Q. – Which Amshaspand (Amesha Spenta) is for *Good Mind*
 - – Bahman
- Continue asking questions till all are done.
- Remember: The questions must be asked anti-clockwise.
- This can be played individually or in teams.

4. Niyashes and their Yazatas Quiz Game

Quiz Game Instruction:

- The teacher must first download this Power Point game and store it on his/her personal computer.
- Put the PPT in “present” or “Slide Show” mode and review all the sections – 5 Niyashes and their Yazatas.
- Click “from beginning” from the top menu bar.
- Click ‘next’ and the images go gray. The sequence is anti-clockwise.



- Begin asking questions from the Pictorial Calendar – in the anti-clockwise sequence.
 - Q. – Which Niyaesh is for *Sun*
 - – Khorshed Niyaesh
- If a student gives an incorrect answer and you click on the incorrect section, the correct section will come up – e.g. Instead of a student saying Khorshed he/she says Adar, when you click on the slide the correct section will open up.
 - Q. – Which Niyaesh is for *Friendship/Agreement*
 - – Meher Niyaesh
- Continue asking questions till all are done.
- Remember: The questions must be asked anti-clockwise.
- This can be played individually or in teams.

Source:

1. The Story of Our Religion - Zoroastrianism by Ava Mehta
2. An Ethnic Perspective by Khojeste Mistree
3. More information on specific Yazatas can be found here: <https://ramiyakaranjia.com/zoroastrian-divine-beings/>
<https://ramiyakaranjia.com/yashts-2/>
<https://ramiyakaranjia.com/5-nyash-an-understanding/>

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