

the history of
the major
religions

Learning objectives

- : To be able to articulate an understanding of the basic history of Zoroastrianism
- : To become familiar with the life history of Zoroaster and the historical and social context of the time in which He appeared
- : To become familiar with the Avesta

materials you will need

- :: Dictionary
- :: Copies of all the activity sheets for every child
- :: Copies of the Homework and Feedback sheets for each child
- :: Glue
- :: Scissors
- :: Pencils, pens, crayons, etc.
- :: Erasers

1. PRAYER (3 minutes)

Choose one prayer from the Prayers Page (section two). Recite it, and then have one of the children recite it. Alternatively, you can use any other prayer that corresponds with one of the stated learning objectives.

2. GO OVER HOMEWORK (5-10 minutes)

3. ACTIVITY & STORY (25-35 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is become familiar with the basics information relating the history of the Zoroastrianism.

Instructions:

1. Give each child a copy of the activity sheet "Map" and the jigsaw puzzle sheet.
2. Ask them to write down their names on the back of the Map sheet.
3. Then ask them cut out the jigsaw puzzle pieces which contain: the name of the religion, Zoroaster or Zarathushtra (the central figure), the place where it started, approximate date when Zoroaster lived started, and the name of the holy book of the Zoroastrian religion.
4. Ask the children to place the pieces of the puzzle in the correct order and then glue them on the top of the Map page where the light colored lines are drawn up.
5. Ask the children to write down underneath each piece of the puzzle the category, such as: religion's name, the founder, place of birth, date of birth, and the holy book.
6. The ask the children to cut out the Zoroastrian symbol from their puzzle sheets and glue them on the space shown on the Map sheet. This symbol is called the "Faravahar" (meaning to "choose" between good and bad).
7. Ask them to color the symbol.
8. Now ask the children to draw a small point on the map of the world shown on the Map sheet, where they live. You may need to help them with this effort. It is okay to use an approximate location.
9. Then ask them to draw a straight line between this dot and the dot showing where Zoroaster came from.

10. With the help of the scale shown on the map, help them figure out how far Persia, where Zoroaster came from, is from their home. The scale is calibrated to show approximate “walking days”.
11. Ask them to write down the “walking days” distance on the line they have drawn from their home to Persia (modern-day Iran).
12. Now ask them to write down the Golden Rule from “the sacred writing” sheet in the box under the puzzle pieces on the Map sheet.
13. The Map sheet is now complete. Ask the children to keep this map sheet in a safe place because it will be helpful to them in the future.

4. SACRED WRITING (5 minutes)

Read the passage below (also known as the “Golden Rule”) out loud and make sure that everyone understands all the words.

Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself.

« Zoroastrian, Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29 »

5. ASSIGN HOMEWORK (1 minute)

- Everyone is to read the Sacred Writing at least once every day with an adult in the following week and try to memorize it.

- In the following week, find at least one person who doesn't know the story of Zoroaster and share it with them.

6. PREPARE TO GIVE CLASS REPORT TO ENTIRE SCHOOL (5 minutes)

7. REFLECTION AND EVALUATION (3 minutes)

Your feedback and comments are very important because they will be used to improve this lesson. Please take a few moments after class to complete the "Reflection and Evaluation" sheet in section five of this lesson.

You may submit your feedback by e-mail to:

feedback@spiritual-education.org

Instead, you may wish to submit your feedback using the web-based form at:

www.spiritual-education.org/feedback

Thank you!

Choose one of the following prayers:

I testify, O Thou Who art the Lord of the whole creation, and the Desire of whosoever hath sought Thee, that, amidst Thy creatures, They (Thy Manifestations) resemble the sun which no matter how often it riseth and setteth is still the one and the same sun.

« Baha'i, Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah, p. 49 »

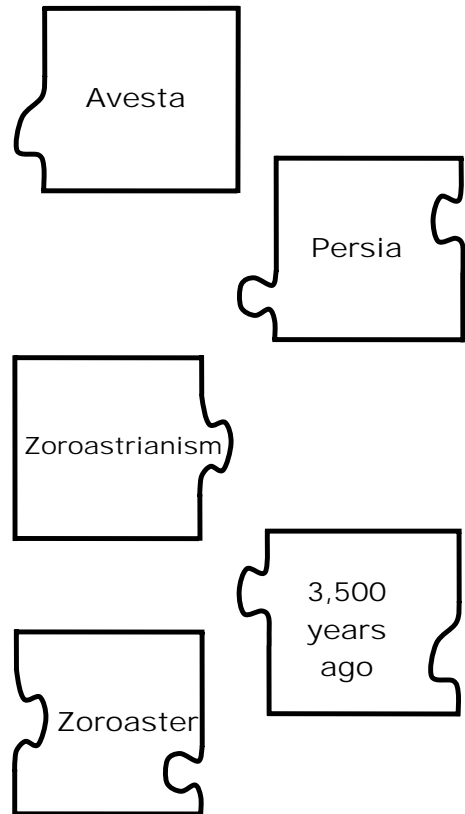
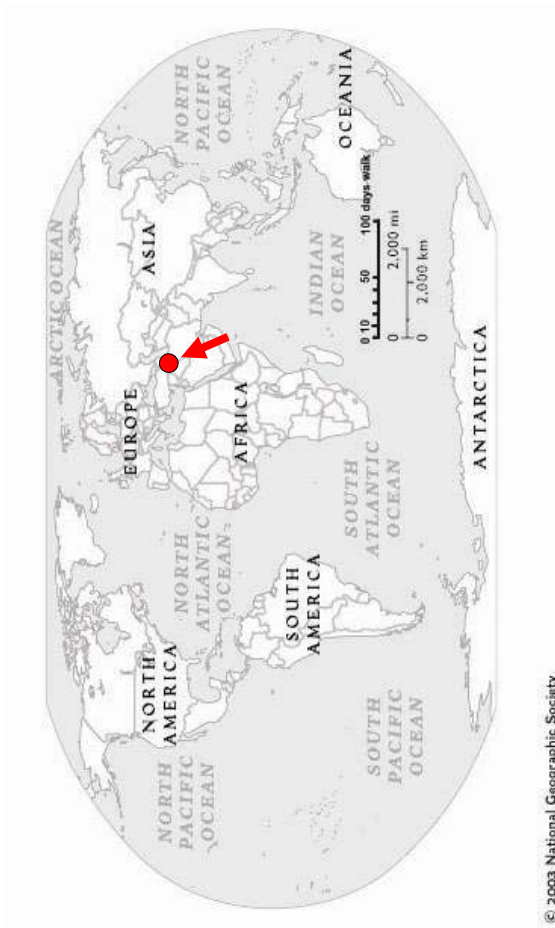
I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness...

« Judaism and Christianity, Isaiah 45:5-7 »

I praise good thoughts, good words, and good deeds and those that are to be thought, spoken, and done. I do accept all good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. I do renounce all evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds.

« Zoroastrianism, The Zend-Avesta, Avesta - Yasna »

Activity Map and Puzzle Pieces



Zoroastrianism Map Sheet

GLUE PUZZLE PIECES HERE					
NAME OF RELIGION	NAME OF FOUNDER	FOUNDER'S BIRTHPLACE	HOW LONG AGO?	NAME OF HOLY BOOK	SYMBOL

WRITE THE SACRED WRITING HERE

GLUE MAP HERE

GOOD THOUGHTS GOOD WORDS GOOD DEEDS



No one really knows for sure when Zoroaster was born. Some say he was born about 3,500 years ago. Others say he was born about 2,500 years ago. No one knows for sure because people did not write down their history. At that time most people did not know how to read or write. There was no paper or pen. Important things were carved in stone.

People of the western part of Iran, where Zoroaster was born, were nomads. Nomads are people who do not live in one place all the time, but move around every season of the year. These nomads did not write down their history. If they wanted to remember anything they would memorize it and teach their children to memorize it and

their children would in turn teach their children to memorize it and so on.

Zoroaster, who is also known by the name Zarathushtra, was a descendant of the ancient kings of Iran. Descendant means that his great great great great great- and many times again- great grandfather was a king. We know little about his life, but we know that he received the divine light of revelation (which means that God talked to him directly and told him what teachings to give people). So Zoroaster became a messenger of Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda means the "Wise Lord". People at the time of Zoroaster called their God by the name Ahura and Zoroaster added the word "Mazda" (which means "wisdom") to Ahura.



Zoroaster traveled a great deal inviting people to the way of Ahura Mazda and His teachings, but most people did not listen to him at first. Slowly and little by little his followers grew until a ruler by the name of King Vishtasp accepted Zoroaster as a messenger from God. People of his time were wandering and fighting tribes.

Zoroaster taught them to stop their wars and helped them live useful lives as peaceful farmers. Good thoughts, good words, and good deeds became the way of life for people who followed him. Centuries later, the famous Iranian King, Cyrus the Great, also accepted Zoroaster and the Zoroastrian religion became the official religions of the Iranians for another 200 years.



Zoroaster composed very beautiful and mysterious verses in praise of Ahura Mazda. These verses are called Gathas and are some of the most important sacred writings of the Zoroastrian religion and make up the central part of the Avesta. Avesta is the Zoroastrian holy book. These verses were memorized by the early Zoroastrians and were later carved in stone so that future generations would know them, too. Zoroaster composed the Gathas to help people become more spiritual so that their souls could progress towards God, the Wise Lord, Ahura Mazda. This is the goal of every Zoroastrian. This is also the goal of all followers of all religions.

Suggested questions for story:

- › Where was Zoroaster born? (Western Iran)
- › How long ago was Zoroaster born? (between 2,550 and 3,500 years ago)
- › Why is Zoroaster important? (He was a messenger of God)
- › What do the Zoroastrian holy writings call God? (Ahura Mazda)
- › What does Ahura Mazda mean? (Wise Lord)
- › Did people accept Zoroaster when he told them he had a message from God? (Not at first, but slowly they did)
- › What is the name of the great Iranian King who became a Zoroastrian (Cyrus the Great).
- › What is the name of Zoroaster's famous verses? (the Gathas)
- › In which book can we find the Gathas? (In the Avesta, which is the sacred book of Zoroastrians)?
- › What are the three things Zoroaster told his follower to do? (to have Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds)
- › Can you give examples of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds? (Help the children to think of examples:

Good Thoughts: thinking how to help others or being peaceful

Good Words: talking to others respectfully and using polite language

Good Deeds: helping others, being generous, charitable, etc.

LESSON **21**

1. What did you like about this lesson? _____

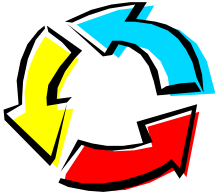
2. Which parts of the lesson did the students like? _____

3. Were the students able to answer the questions asked throughout the lesson? _____

4. Did the lesson's level match the students' capabilities? _

5. What would you change or add to the lesson? _____

You can submit your feedback by e-mail to feedback@spiritual-education.org
or by using the web-based form at www.spiritual-education.org/feedback.



TO THE PARENTS OF: _____

FROM: _____

DATE: _____

WHAT DID WE DO?



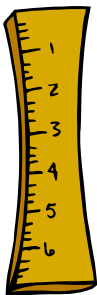
The topic for this session was:

The History of the Major Religions

The learning objective was:

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HOW DID YOUR CHILD DO?



- Preparation: [] **Great!** Homework was completed.
[] **Fair.** Homework only partially completed.
[] **Poor.** Homework was not attempted.
- Participation: [] **Great!** Active participation
[] **Fair.** Passive participation
[] **Poor.** Not active (needs to improve)
- Interaction: [] **Great!** Very understanding and cooperative
[] **Fair.** Occasionally helpful, occasionally disruptive
[] **Poor.** Distractive to others (Needs to improve)

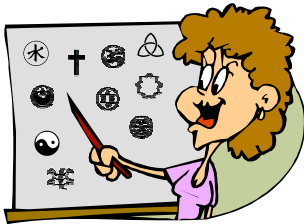
Comments: _____



WHAT'S THE HOMEWORK?

- Read the Sacred Writing below (also known as the "Golden Rule") at least once every day with an adult in the following week and try to memorize it.
"Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself"
« *Shayast-na-Shayast, 13:29* »
- Between now and the next class, find at least one person who doesn't know the story of Zoroaster and share it with them.

WHAT WILL WE DO AT THE NEXT SESSION?



We will continue with:

The History of the Major Religions - Judaism

We will cover the following learning objectives:

- :: To be able to articulate an understanding of the basic history of Judaism
- :: To become familiar with the life history of Moses and the historical and social context of the time in which He appeared
- :: To become familiar with the Torah