Zoroastrian Association of Houston
8787 W. Airport Blvd.
Houston, TX  77071
MANASHNI WISHES A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

SUNDAY SCHOOL

PLACE: ZHCC, 8787 W. Airport Blvd., Houston, TX 77071  Tel:  (713-270-9339)

TIME:  11:15 AM.

DATE:  January 13, 2008

Children’s Session: Vehishta will conduct the Children’s session

Middle Group: Pearline and Arnavaz will conduct the Middle Group session.

Senior Group: Sarosh Collector will conduct the Senior Group session

Adult Sunday School Classes – Recently, the ZAH brought Paul Kriwaczek to lecture about his book, In Search of Zarathustra. His main premise was that Zoroastrianism had influenced subsequent world religions — especially Western Religion.

To follow-up, Ken Vincent, longtime friend of the ZAH and author of THE MAGI: From Zoroaster to the “Three Wise Men,” will emphasize Zaraster’s unique place among religious prophets: 1) His revelation from God is expressed in his own words and is still accessible to us, and 2) His experience of God is at the highest moral level, requiring abstract thinking for expression (unlike the concrete and remedial messages of Moses and Mohammed). Ken will compare and contrast the basic tenets of Zoroastrianism to those of other world religions — some that have survived and a few that did not.

Dr. Ken R. Vincent is a writer whose books include THE MAGI: From Zoroaster to the “Three Wise Men,” THE GOLDEN THREAD, God’s Promise of Universal Salvation, and VISIONS OF GOD FROM THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE. He is the Webmaster for the UNIVERSALIST HERALD (www.universalist-herald.net) and on the Editorial Team of VITAL SIGNS. Dr. Vincent is retired from teaching Psychology including the Psychology of Religious Experience at Houston Community College. He has over 100 publications in the fields of psychology and religion. Dr. Vincent is a member of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, the International Association of Near-Death Studies, and the Alister Hardy Society (for the study of religious experience).

MEETINGS

ZARATHUSHTI INVESTMENT GROUP: The Zarathushti Investment Group meets on a regular basis on the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. Those interested please call Yazdi Sidhwa 281-265-0589.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE MEETING: The Building Construction Committee (BCC) meets on regular basis on the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. Those interested please call Yazdi Sidhwa 281-265-0589.

GOLDEN GROUP: The Golden Group meets on the fourth Sunday of each month. To join this group, please call Zarine Balsara at (281) 304-6611
LIBRARY COMMITTEE: The Library Committee meets on a regular basis on the first Sunday of each month at 11:00 AM. If you are interested in helping, or would like more information, please call Aban Rustomji at 281-493-1275 or e-mail her at aban@coatingengineers.com.

COMING EVENTS

Saturday, February 2, 2008. Jashn-e-Sadeh. Come and celebrate Jashne-e-Sadeh at the ZHCC like in previous years. The festivities will start around 6:00 p.m. Atash Niyayesh will start at 6:30 p.m. and the bon fire will be lit immediately thereafter. Food, music, and other fun filled activities follow. Please send in your RSVP to - Cyra Kanga @ crkanga@yahoo.com or call 281-969-8057 no later than January 27, 2008. See attached flyer.

Sunday, February 10, 2008. Car Rally/Scavenger Hunt. Car Rally/Scavenger Hunt after Sunday School. This is like a “Treasure Hunt” on wheels. Rules for this event will be provided on that day. See attached flyer

Sunday, March 9, 2008 – Sports. Details to be announced

Saturday, March 22 - Jashan and NoRouz Festivities – Details to follow

REPORTS

YOUR EXECUTIVE TEAM REPORTS – By Percy Master

The ZAH EC met on Tuesday, December 18, at 8:15PM for our monthly meeting.

It is time again to rotate the chairmanship of the EC. Kaemerz Dotiwalla has been unanimously elected as the new chairperson of the EC. We thank Zia Anklesaria for her hard work of the past few months as chairperson, and appreciate her continuing help and support.

FEZANA’s Infrastructure Working Group has been charged with exploring the feasibility of establishing a central resource center for Zoroastrian books, literature, magazines, scholarly research materials, etc. in North America – in essence, FFEZANA would like to establish a North American library devoted to items of relevance to Zarathushtis and the Zarathushhti religion. The library will be beneficial to the educational development and awareness of the current, and especially the future generations, of Zarathushtis, as well as the non-Zarathushtis, interested in the Zarathushhti religion, history and culture. Given our own world-class library here in the ZHCC - the only Zarathushhti library in North America with a Dewey Decimal catalog system, maintained by our very own Aban Rustomji, the EC unanimously decided that Houston should put a bid in to host the FEZANA Resource Center. The EC has therefore requested the ZAH library committee to prepare the bid for Houston.

This year will mark the 10th anniversary of our ZHCC. To properly mark the occasion, a dedicated team of volunteers under the leadership of Kaemerz Dotiwala is planning a series of educational, cultural and entertainment events. If anyone would like to volunteer for this committee, please contact Kaemerz.

The Zoroastrian Sports Committee (ZSC) is proud to announce that the “11th Zarathushti Games” will be held in the beautiful city of San Diego, California, USA from July 2nd thru July 6th, 2008. All Zarathushti athletes throughout the globe are encouraged to participate in these games. Sports such as volleyball, track, basketball, and table tennis are on offer. Visit their website at http://www.zathletics.com/ for more up-to-date information about registration, qualifications, events and venue.

Remember to visit the JUST NEWS link on the ZAH website for the latest news on ZAH.

Until next month, we, your EC, wish you the very best and look forward to seeing you at the Center! If there is anything you would like to discuss with the EC, please be sure to contact Nazneen Khumbatta, our secretary, so that your issue can be added to the agenda for the next EC meeting.


LIBRARY REPORT – by Aban Rustomji

The ZAH Library would not be what it is today without the generous financial support from several members of our community. As ZAH has always done, the donations are gratefully acknowledged on a plaque and placed in the main
hall. Your gifts have allowed us to make great strides this year. I am urging you to continue to be as generous as your circumstances allow to a project that is meaningful and will remain in perpetuity. Please add to our collection of books on Zoroastrianism or written by Zoroastrian authors. All books and cash donations will be acknowledged with your name on a bookplate.

Have you viewed our seasonal display of the Magi cards and figurines courtesy of Pam and Ken Vincent? Copies of Ken’s book, *The Magi: From Zoroaster to the “Three Wise Men”* is in the library. This month our special thanks and recognition go to three individuals. Vehishta Kaikobad is docent extraordinaire. Her personal interaction with the specially designed tour, *If Stones Could Speak*, through MFAH’s permanent collection focusing on the threads of Zoroastrianism was a tour de force. Vehishtas’ ability to communicate effectively, her warm and friendly attitude and her ability to commit to the time and effort is to be commended.

Thanks also go out to another artistic and dedicated member of our community. You have probably observed Yezdi Engineer with his camera at ZAH events. Yezdi has accumulated all of the pictures from 2004-7, archived them on CD’s, and presented the library with two sets. One set is available for check out and the other set is for archival use. This labor of love project of Yezdi will be a valuable addition to our collection.

Some of you had requested an audio tape of the Krivaczek’s lecture. I am pleased to inform you that Nauzer Bilimoria successfully accomplished this by using his IPod and transferring it to a CD. You can make arrangements with Nauzer for your own copy by sending him an email at nauzer2000@yahoo.com.

Mark your calendar for **April 12th** for our upcoming event of a day-long religion education seminar is set. This Dallas/Houston collaboration is a part of the 10th Anniversary celebration of our Center, and the speakers are Prof. Dr. Almut Hintze from University of London, School of Oriental Studies, Prof. Jenny Rose, Zoroastrian Studies, Claremont University California, Dr. Matthew Stolper, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago and our own Sarosh Manekshaw. More details to follow.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### ESSAY COMPETITON

The ZAH Library held an Essay competition for Zoroastrian students of Texas. The topic of the essay was: How may the principles embodied in the *Amesha Spenta* be used to address current world problems? The prize for this competition was a coveted round-trip air ticket to attend the Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Australia. Naomi Bhappu was the winner of this competition and her winning essay is reproduced below.

**The Solution**

Theodore Rubin once said, “The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.” ¹ There are currently many major issues that affect the world, and although there is plenty of talk about these issues, there is not enough talk of the solutions. Stating that there is a problem is only the first step towards fixing it. According to The Good Life, the principles of the *Amesha Spentas* “can be incorporate[d] into our lives,” and can be “viewed as ideals which may be realized by the actions of right-thinking humans.”² When it comes to dealing with major global issues such as the genocide in Darfur, the question should not be who is to blame, but more importantly, how is the problem going to be resolved?

One of today's global issues that has been discussed at great length without significant action has been genocide. In 1948 *The U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* stated that “genocide is a crime under international law” and recognized “that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required.”³ On January 21 2007, the U.N. General Assembly held the first memorial of the freedom of the Nazi death camps on its 60th anniversary. At this convention Secretary General Kofi Annan brought up the crisis in Darfur and advised the U.N. members to act against the war criminals in Sudan. After addressing the recent mass killings in Cambodia, Rwanda and Yugoslavia, Annan stated, “Since the Holocaust, the world has, to its shame, failed more than once to prevent or halt genocide.” Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Elie Wiesel said, “The Jewish witness that I am… sounds the alarm to prevent these tragedies from being done to others. And yes, I am convinced if the world had listened to those

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of us who tried to speak, we may have prevented Darfur, Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda.” While these prominent world leaders are addressing the problem, few are giving solutions. “I must do something’ always solves more problems than ‘Something must be done.’” The author of this quote is unknown, but the words hit home when discussing the struggle in Darfur. The U.S. has started an activist coalition called Save Darfur and they beckon the call so often said at a time of crisis: “something must be done.”

If only Kofi Annan was a Zoroastrian and had sat in the Sunday school class of Sarosh Collector once or twice, he would have known seven steps one can take in order to make a decision, or in this case, solve a problem: The Amesha Spentas.

First and foremost someone must step up to the plate, and that someone is you, or Spenta Mainyu, the start of the solution. The next four steps in this journey are actions steps, literal things that can be done to achieve your goal. The last two are the results, the figurative outcomes of your efforts.

Second as with any problem in life you must think positively, go in with a good attitude and a good mind, Vohu Mano. In the situation in Darfur, there isn’t much to be positive about, but we must use our good mind to be proactive and start brainstorming solutions rather than restating the problem.

Then comes Asha Vahishta. We must seek to understand what it is the Sudanese government wants, and try to work with, rather than against them, the Janjaweed, and all other parties involved. Only after you know what the actual problem is, can you begin to come up with an effective solution. Asha Vahishta represents truth and righteousness and ultimately the fundamental ethics upon which the basic tenets of Zoroastrianism are based: Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.

The fourth step is passion. Whatever it is your goal is, you must be committed to fulfilling it and you must know what you want to achieve. Kshatra Vairya represents desire, or the passion that you need to dedicate yourself to the cause. Throughout history, and all the genocides that we have witnessed, once people became aware of the gravity of the situation and the masses upon masses of people that died, it aroused strong emotion or passion. The world must recognize that it is not as simple as placing troops in Sudan, for that would just cause more deaths and not solve anything. We must look at the circumstances with an open mind and an open heart, and think long term with the end in mind.

The fifth step, and the last of the “action steps” is devotion to that which is good and just, or Spenta Armaiti. While there are many other global issues right now, someone must be dedicated to dealing with Darfur, whether it is the U.S. or the U.N., it must be done.

The last two steps, are the result of the first five, and are almost always discussed together. Haurvatat and Ameretat are known as the twin blessings, bestowed upon the man who desires and attempts to embody the other characteristics of Ahura Mazda. Haurvatat, stands for perfection. If you complete the first five steps, ideally you will reach your goal, and what is your goal if it is not perfection? Ameretat is the final step, and represents the spirit of immortality. Theoretically, if you have achieved your goal or solved your problem, your idea or solution is eternal, and is therefore immortal.

In 1932 Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, “It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.” However, by the looks of the world today, I don’t think many people heard what he had to say. Many speak of change; however, few speak of how the change will be brought about. In the circumstances in Sudan, nothing is going to change overnight; the ending of this horrific genocide is going to be a long process, which will take time. However, the predicament we face is not that the process of ending these awful mass murders will take time; it is that we have not even yet begun. If everyone knew about the Amesha Spentas and their principles, they could apply these teachings to try and do away with genocide.

The Amesha Spentas are essential parts of the Zoroastrian religion and while not everyone knows what they are, the principles that they embody can be used in everyone’s life.

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5 http://quotations.about.com/cs/inspirationquotes/a/Action1.htm
FROM XERXES SIDHWA: - Xerxes works for the United States State Department and is presently assigned a position in Ethiopia. Here is an update from him.

Dear Family and Friends. I have received several emails asking for an update and thought that I would send another mass email letting everyone know how I am doing to friends old and new.

Well it's been 6 months since I have been in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I have finally hung things on the wall and feel pretty settled. The last two months have been pretty crazy….

In November, I went to Kazakhstan for a week of training. Almaty is an interesting city—a mix between a leafy European suburb and Soviet style buildings and Soviet culture. Some of you know that I have wanted to go to Central Asia for a while, and it was great to get a taste of the region. I had a hard time exploring the city because everything was in Russian and Kazakh, but I managed and even learned a smattering of Russian in order to buy some handicrafts—luckily, I had my little calculator which made bargaining a little easier.

After a week in Kazakhstan, I went to Turkey for a 10 day vacation and had a great time there. Istanbul is really one of the world's great cities and my friend who lived there showed me around and we had a blast. I ate some great food (made a couple trips to McDonalds…) and made a trip to Cappadocia which was amazing.

Back in Ethiopia work has been crazy. We had some VIP visitors…..The head of USAID came for a visit a few weeks ago and then a few weeks ago Secretary Rice was in town for a series of meetings. So we were all busy with that…as a Junior Officer I got the "privilege" of luggage duty and had to escort the bags of the Secretary and her party as they came in and left….glad to know that the Top Secret clearance is of some use.

But I did get to ferry some dignitaries from neighboring countries to and from some meetings, so that was meetings, so that was interesting. Besides the visits…I have been working a lot on developing our HIV and Nutrition program and working with the government to take nutrition more seriously and build their capacity, which is a real challenge.

I have also been traveling for work. I just returned from a trip to the East of the country, which was great. This part of the country has a very strong Muslim feel to it and was very different from Addis. The area produces chat, which is a drug that people chew…and everyone was just sitting out in the streets chewing chat all day.

The highlight of the trip was that I fed a group of hyenas some meat and even fed them with my mouth…there was a small stick involved…..pretty cool. And I had my first experience eating raw chunks of meat, which is an Ethiopian delicacy.

In other news…I will be vacationing in Dubai for New Years. My cousin and I will be meeting there. And then at the end of January I will be going to Djibouti for work to check out the port that our food aid comes through.

I hope that this email finds you all doing well during the holiday season. I look forward to hearing how you all are doing and am promising that I will be better with email in the New Year.

A few of you have asked for me address and it is:
Xerses Sidhwa
2030 Addis Ababa Place
Dulles, VA
20189-2030

Take care and happy holidays…
Xerses

BIRTH: Isabel Ann Bhatia arrived on Thursday, December 13 to Yasmin and Vik Bhatia weighing 7 lb., 10 Oz in Dallas, TX. Bomi Zarolia, the proud grand father, is presently in Dallas with his daughter Yasmin and grand daughter Isabel. Congratulations to Bomi, Yasmin and Vik from Manashni and its readers.

WEDDING: Two brides in two months in the Godiwalla family.
Sara Godiwalla was married to Cyrus Subawalla in Mumbai, India on November 29, 2007.
Nina Godiwalla was married to Boris Siperstein on December 15, 2007 at the Godiwalla residence in Spring, TX at a quiet ceremony.

Shara and Cyrus will be residing in Chicago, IL and Nina and Boris will be in Philadelphia.
Manashni and its readers wish newlyweds a long and happy married life together.
OBITUARY: Mundagar Merwanji, wife of Armine (nee Mehta) father of Kersasp and Gilan and Uncle (Mama) of Kaiwan Bhrucha, Sharaine Vakil and Thirty Engineer, passed away in Karachi on December 31, 2007. Manashini and its readers extend their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

MEMBERSHIP DUES: All current memberships expired December 31, 2007. Please recognize the need for your support and contribution and renew your subscription to ZAH.

The table below, as approved by the 2004 AGM, shows the current minimum membership dues for calendar year 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Dues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patron – Family</td>
<td>$500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patron – Single</td>
<td>$250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patron – Single Head of Household</td>
<td>$250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular Family</td>
<td>$225</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Family</td>
<td>$200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular Single Head of Household</td>
<td>$115</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular Single</td>
<td>$115</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Single (over age 65)</td>
<td>$40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Family (one spouse over age 65)</td>
<td>$65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>$25</td>
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Please mail your membership dues to:

Treasurer
Zoroastrian Association of Houston
8787 W. Airport Blvd
Houston, TX 77071

FEZANA CRITICAL ASSISTANCE SUB-COMMITTEE. We as the Critical Assistance sub-committee of FEZANA have been requested to edit an upcoming issue of the FEZANA Journal and we are honored.

The theme of the issue we will be editing is called Living with Challenges. This issue will focus more on living with adversities, such as genetic challenges, birth deformities, cruelty inflicted by war, social challenges, overcoming hardships, living with the challenge of bereavement, challenges of single parenthood due to death or divorce.

We would like to invite you to explore the writers within you to send us articles that may fit into this topic. The topics listed below are only ideas, we are sure there are many more ways in which we can explore this topic.

**Ideas would include:**
1. Folks living with intellectual challenges
2. Folks living with physical challenges
3. Challenges of living with the emotional and physical repercussions of war
4. What are challenges in general and how to face them
5. The challenge of having a fear (such as heights) and how to overcome the same
6. The challenges of single parenthood

**What we need:** are interesting personal vignettes, personal testimonials, articles which would raise people's social consciousness and sensibility. Ideas include:
1. Personal narratives
2. Articles that would fall under journalistic guidelines, such as what you would see in a magazine or newspaper with facts & figures.

Although you are aware the editors will make the final decision on which pieces actually make it into the Journal and which ones do not, we do hope to receive favorable responses and look forward to working with you on this new venture of ours. We are looking for all articles to please be emailed to us no later than February 10, 2008.

Thank You,

Hosi Mehta at hosimehta@aol.com or 630-279-0566
Houtoxi Contractor at hurt.contractor@gmail.com or 412-367-2948
Freyaz Shroff at freyaz@aol.com or +91-98922-73973 (Mumbai)
January 2008
Fellow Zarathushtis:

Our tenth anniversary celebration of the Zarathushti Heritage & Cultural Center is essentially a festivale to recognize the commitment and accomplishments of our community. Ever since King Jamshed introduced the Navroze Celebration it has been the norm to celebrate one’s success—and our community will use the year 2008 to celebrate its past—and explore a vision for our future.

A celebration such as this implicitly asks fundamental questions: what accounts for our successes? and where are we headed in the future?

The answer lies with the determination and dedication of a community that believed in itself and the largess of major donors who shared our vision. And as our influence and involvement steadily widens, the fundamental structure of our community in North America continues to strengthen with our diverse perspectives.

So it is only natural that we come together to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the ZHCC in a befitting manner. Dedicated volunteers have started planning a year-long series of educational, cultural and entertainment events. Here is a brief outline of the events planned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saturday, February 2</th>
<th>Jashan e Sadeh</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, February 10</td>
<td>Car Rally</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 9 - Rain day March 16</td>
<td>Sports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, March 22</td>
<td>Jashan, Navroze Festivities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, April 12</td>
<td>Religious Education Seminar - 4 speakers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, April 13</td>
<td>Mela/ Meals on Wheels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, May 23 – Sunday, May 25th</td>
<td>Iranian Nite, Jashan - Honor our Own - Treasures Exhibit - Community Picture-Lunch, ZAH Gala Nite - Mini Broadway, WZCC - honoring our own - Lunch, Natak/ Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, May 26</td>
<td>Excursions for out of town guests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Please reserve these dates and specially the grand three day festivale-2008 during Memorial Day weekend. We look forward to seeing you all. Our next meeting for volunteers is Sunday, January 13, 2007, @ 2:00 pm@ the Center.
ZAH EVENT
CAR RALLY/SCAVENGER HUNT
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2008
AT 2:00 P.M.
COST $5.00 PER PERSON

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RIDDLES TO BE SOLVED,
CLUES TO BE UNRAVELLED
ITEMS TO BE BROUGHT
AND SOME TO BE BOUGHT
SO FORM YOUR TEAM
AND COME TO ZHCC
TO CELEBRATE ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

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MAKE UP A TEAM AND SEND YOUR
REGISTRATION TO
CYRA KANGA at crkanga@yahoo.com
NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 2, 2008
Saturday - February 2, 2008

Festivities start at 6:00 p.m. with Atash Niyäesh at 6:30 and Bonfire thereafter. Food (Iranian) Music & Dance

Members $12.00 – Children Three to Ten years $6.00

RSVP - Cyra Kanga at 281-969-8057 or e-mail her at crkanga@yahoo.com