

shap

EDUCATION IN RELIGIONS

(THE SHAP WORKING PARTY ON
WORLD RELIGIONS IN EDUCATION)

Calendar of Religious Festivals July 2018 – December 2019



Cousin Harris was Bar Mitzvah at a children's summer camp in Atlanta, Georgia – a quietly casual but totally meaningful event.

EDITORIAL 2018 – 9

With great sadness we have to record the death on May 3rd, 2018 of Professor John Hinnells, in many ways our 'Founding Father' and first Secretary of the Shap Working Party. Please visit the web-site page for Members' memorial tributes.

Jubilee time!

In 2019 the Shap Working Party will celebrate its 50th Birthday with a joyful Jubilee/get together at the Shap Wells Hotel, a significant venue in the Lake District, where our Shappery first began in April, 1969.

Time to quit ...

However, at its AGM in April 2018, after careful deliberation, the Working Party has accepted that its initial task of ***focusing attention and education on a plurality of faith/belief traditions*** (as opposed to a restricted diet of any single faith) has been **largely completed**. Accordingly, the Working Party has now made plans to *'self-destruct'* after its Jubilee - although the twelve-strong Members of the Shap Calendar Group will continue to produce and distribute our normal five different versions of festival dates for many future years.

The nature of our search

To be more specific, what does **'largely completed'** mean in this context? What has been the role/purpose of the Working Party and what part has the Calendar played over these fifty years in pursuing and, we hope, to some extent in achieving, what we set out to do?

The deepest/major concerns of most religious and philosophical enquiry seem to revolve around the questions of a) God/No God; b) Life here and hereafter; c) Suffering; d) Ethical concerns; and e) the role and identity of the Self. Attempting to find sustainable answers to these issues ***in a world religions context*** has been the distinctive bread and butter of the Shap Working Party (as evidenced in the 650 plus articles in the back numbers of our Journal - see our website), where so many theistic and non-theistic elements feature, as of course they do in our Calendars. And our focus has been on exploring them not just in a formal, reflective manner but also amongst the colour and vivacity of daily life, worship and celebration.

Key to objectivity

The key here for us has been the search for integrity in our approach to objectivity. It is so tempting to be caught up in the tradition where one grew up (or to which one now adheres) that there is always some danger of losing our perspective. Perhaps we should all 'lay on one

side' for a month or so our own 'faith loyalty' and ask ourselves in private (or indeed publish if some so prefer) which **other** traditions seem to provide meaningful answers to these Big Questions. And only when those answers are clear to us should we return to pursue our study of our own home tradition, where our greater knowledge and experience are too valuable to ignore. Perhaps then we can openly and honestly determine where we each stand on these vital issues.

Aids to reflection

As a major step in this direction the Shap Calendar Booklet now, in its 49th year, has recently grown in size through the addition of still further material of a **reflective** nature to many of its entries. This approach is one of two that have been further developed in the current edition, where we combine **additional description** of practice, derived from the five websites linked to each entry, with **insightful reflection** on the nature of what is being celebrated. Well over fifty of these websites are fresh this year since a number drop out each time we explore them.

Several of the entries in our Booklet now fill an A4 page, and for this 2018-2019 Calendar every festival has been accorded a whole page to itself in readiness for further treatment of others. This is in response in part to the fact that few of our customers will print out the whole Booklet in its entirety but will search and study its riches on line and only print those elements they select for themselves and their students.

The Calendar will continue!

Apart from that the different versions of the Shap Calendar reflect much the same diet as previously, although the days of the week for each festival are now shown in the eBooklet, the Calendar Pages and the Abbreviated version. From 2019 the leadership of the Calendar Group will be in the hands of four Members, **Paul, David, Roger and myself**, and we hope it will continue to function creatively for a further five years - if not for another fifty! Who knows, we might even return to printing some materials to post along with the colourful printed Wallchart!

Thanks go to each of the following for their input into what is genuinely a team effort: to **David** (Pictorial Calendar) and **Paul** (Wallchart and everything) especially, but also to **Anne, Brian, Clive, Jasjit, Malcolm, Roger and Wendy**. Sadly John Hinnells has died and **Mary** has left us, but we welcome **Gill Rose** who, with her husband **David**, will help us oversee Christian materials in the future.

Peter Woodward

Editor

PS New addition: See Annual Methodist Covenant Service January 6/13.

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018–2019

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Origins of the Shap Working Party

In the spring of 1969 a conference for those interested in the development of 'comparative religion in education' was held near the village of Shap in the Lake District. Participants came from a variety of religious backgrounds and represented the full range of education from primary school to university. Professors Ninian Smart, Fred Hilliard and Geoffrey Parrinder presented papers, as did Harold Blackham, John Hinnells, Raymond Johnston and Eric Sharpe. A working party on 'world religions in education' emerged from this initial conference, taking the name of Shap from the place where it was formed.

Today Shap's members come from a still wider variety of religious and cultural backgrounds and have the professional and academic experience to advise and support individuals and organizations who seek to improve their understanding of religions, beliefs and religious festivals. The Working Party is renowned for providing accurate information and resources about religions and religious festivals to schools and colleges, and increasingly to other public sector organizations and to the business world.

For fuller information see the document 'WHAT IS THE SHAP WORKING PARTY?' which features elsewhere on our eCalendar download website.

The present officers of Shap *are as follows:*

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The Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education

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The contents of this calendar are compiled and published in good faith and the Working Party and the Editorial team accept no liability for any claim arising from them whether the loss is direct or indirect.

SHAP CALENDAR OF RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

July 2018 – December 2019

Please Note

1. The page number references given at the end of each entry relate to:
 - a) the first edition of the book, ***Festivals in World Religions***, published for the Shap Working Party by Longman in 1986;
 - b) the new edition of the same book published by RMEP in 1998.
2. Orthodox Christians celebrate their festivals using either the 'Old' (the Julian) or the 'New' (Gregorian) calendar. The Orthodox choice of calendar tends to reflect local conditions and is NOT a matter of church doctrine. The formula for calculating the date of Easter differs for the Orthodox from that used in the Christian West. However, the Orthodox Easter Cycle is celebrated on the same dates throughout all Orthodox communities. In 2019 Orthodox dates will fall a week later than Western ones.
3. Jewish festivals commence, like Shabbat, at sunset on the evening of the day prior to the dates shown below.
4. Muslim festivals begin in the evening - before the Gregorian dates we show in this Calendar. Since they are lunar, each Muslim Festival's date recedes by 10 or 11 days each Gregorian year.
5. Several Pagan festivals also commence at sunset.
6. Zoroastrian dates vary according to the three different 'Calendars' currently in use. The dates of several Zoroastrian festivals (notably in the Shenshai and the Kadmi / Qadimi Calendars) recede by one day each Gregorian Leap Year.
7. ***month** indicates uncertainty as to the exact date of the festival
8. We now use the **Name of the Festival** to show in **BOLD** if its date remains the same in each (Gregorian) year; in *ITALICS* if it changes by just one or two days from year to year; and in *ITALICS* but UNDERLINED if it varies considerably, as is the case with most lunar dates.
9. There are now **five download websites** following the text for each **Festival** and these mostly follow a regular pattern:
 - i) Description, often from within the appropriate tradition;
 - ii) An alternative description, usually from a different type of source;
 - iii) Educational material, for school, college or research;
 - iv) Audio visual materials of an evocative nature;
 - v) Something creatively different.
10. **The bottom row of the new Wallchart** lists twelve eminent individuals who have made a significant contribution that is noteworthy to Science, Ethics, Humanism, Atheism, Agnosticism or Theistic belief. Information on their achievements and their lives features at the start of each Calendar Month in the Booklet, along with informative download websites, prepared and selected by Professor Brian Gates of the University of Cumbria.

7. CALENDAR OF DATES AND DESCRIPTIONS

2018 2018 2018 2018 2018 2018

July 2018

Here is the seventh of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

July 2018

Wole SOYINKA

1934 -

Wole Soyinka was born in Abeokuta, Nigeria in July 1934. His family background is Yoruba in ethnicity, culture and religion, and also Anglican Christian, with a strong commitment to education and women's rights. He studied in the UK as well as Nigeria and his passion for social justice led to his political campaigning and subsequent relocation to the USA. There and internationally he is renowned as a playwright, novelist and poet; the first African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. His beliefs recently led him to reject his US citizenship in response to Donald Trump's election as President. He expounds the transformative power of Yoruba humanism.

Introductory biography

<http://www.biography.com/people/wole-soyinka-9489566>

Nobel data base

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1986/soyinka-facts.html

Anti-Trump commitment

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/wolesoyinka>

Comment on Islam

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/06/wole-soyinka-isis-boko-haram/484310>

Beyond religions

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/hay-festival/9600954/Wole-Soyinka-If-religion-was-taken-away-Id-be-happy.html>

11 videos

<https://vimeo.com/tag:wole+soyinka>

Mixed collection of photos

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/soyinka>

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 1 July, 2018

JASHN-E TIRGAN (TIR JASHAN) *Zoroastrian (Iranian)*

Jashn-e Tirgan is an ancient quarter year summer festival, celebrated about three months after the spring NoRuz. Tirgan is devoted to the divinity Tir and is associated with the dog-star Sirius and the coming of the rains in Iran and the fertility they bring.

On this day it is customary to visit the Fire Temple to give thanks to Ahura Mazda, to participate in a *jashn* or thanksgiving ceremony, listen to stories of how the boundaries of Iran were established in antiquity with its Central Asian neighbour Turan (now Turkmenistan) by an archer shooting an arrow, share a community meal, play with 'rainbow' bracelets made of seven coloured silks, splash each other with water, and dance and make merry.

a) pp 254-255; b) p 131.

More information at ...

1. [Cais SOAS - Celebrations - Jashn-e-Tirgan](#)
2. [Bintudaddy: Tirgan Iranian Summer Festival \(Yeki Bood Yeki Nabood\)](#)
3. [Zoroastrian Heritage - Tirgan](#)
4. [Images for Jashn-e-Tirgan](#)
5. [Iran Review: Arash the Archer and the Festival of Rain \(Jashn-e Tirgan\)](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 8 July – Tuesday, 17th July (*Kadmi*)

Sunday, 11 March, 2018 – Tuesday, 20 March, 2018 (*Iranian*)

Tuesday, 7th August, 2018 – Thursday, 16th August, 2018 (*Shahenshai*)

FRAVARDIGAN / MUKTAD *Zoroastrian*

The Fravardigan festival (the festival of the *fravashis*), popularly known as *Muktad* (All Souls), commences ten days before NoRuz and is the last festival of the old year. The Zoroastrian day commences at sunrise and not midnight, and so during sunrise on the first day of the festival the immortal souls, together with their *fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors, artistically depicted as half man/half bird), are welcomed by name by the Zoroastrian *Mobeds* or *Magi* (priests).

For ten days they reside in the place of worship, hovering around a table full of metal vases, each specifically earmarked for an individual family and containing white flowers. They leave the physical world after the last ceremony, held on the tenth evening, but before the dawn of NoRuz. The designated priest - as a farewell gesture - will then empty the water from one of the metal vases, which he will also turn upside down, signifying that it is time for the immortal souls and the *fravashis* to return to the spiritual world.

Theologically Fravardigan is the most important Zoroastrian festival after NoRuz, and, since it deals with one's departed ancestors, many Zoroastrians regard it to be their holiest festival. This linking of the past with the present and the future is typical of much of Zoroastrian life.

During these ten days Zoroastrians often take time off from work, pray extensively, recite the five *Gathas* (hymns composed by Zarathushtra) and ensure their houses are thoroughly cleaned. They prepare daily samples of sacred food enjoyed by their departed ancestors while still alive, and take these to the place of worship, to be tasted by them during the daily ceremonies. This ritually consecrated food, along with chosen fruits, is then shared by the living in the special *Hamaspahmaidem Gahambar*, a communal feast celebrated after the ceremony is over.

a) pp 250-252; b) pp 129-130, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Muktad - When Souls Come-a-Visiting](#)
2. [Muktad](#)
3. [Zoroastrian Heritage Institute - Pateti](#)
4. [Images for Fravardigan](#)
5. [Frashogard - What to do and pray during the Muktad](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 10 July, 2018

ANNIVERSARY OF THE MARTYRDOM OF THE BAB Baha'i

This day recalls the death of the *Bab*, executed by firing squad in Tabriz, Persia, at noon on July 9th, 1850. Baha'is commemorate his death at noon with readings and prayers from the Baha'i Scriptures. It has become a holy day of rest when Baha'is should refrain from work.

The Báb (the word means 'Gate' - that through which another would come) was the title adopted by 'Ali Muhammad Shirāzi, a 19th century Persian religious leader and founder of the Bábi movement. He and his followers were persecuted by the religious leaders of his country and this culminated in his being publicly shot by a firing squad in 1850. However, Bahá'ís believe that his martyrdom was the occasion of a miracle witnessed by thousands. They hold that the first attempt to shoot the Báb resulted only in severing the ropes by which he was bound and freeing him so that he could conclude an important conversation with a follower; after the Báb's death his followers almost unanimously accepted Mírzá Ḥusayn-`Alí Núrí (Bahá'u'lláh - the name means "The Glory of God") as their new religious leader.

The commemoration of the Martyrdom of the Báb is one of nine days in the year when Bahá'ís should take time off work or school to be able to participate in religious gathering. His body is now buried in a magnificent tomb in Hairs.

a) pp 26-27; b) pp 19, 21-22.

More information at ...

1. [Baha'i World News Service: Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Bab](#)
2. [Baha'i Blog: The Martyrdom of the Bab and Jesus Christ](#)
3. [Baha'i Library - The Martyrdom of the Bab](#)
4. [Susan Gammage: Holy Day Celebration for the Martyrdom of the Bab](#)
5. [Huffington Post - Martyrdom of the Bab](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 13 July, 2018 – Sunday, 15 July, 2018

O-BON Japanese (in Japan – not Tokyo - see 13 August)

A Japanese festival when the spirits of the departed are welcomed back home with feasting and dancing. Fires are often lit to illuminate their arrival and departure. Celebrations in rural areas may take place one month earlier.

a) pp 162-163; b) pp 82, 86-87, 89.

More information at ...

5. [The 1. Go Japan: Japanese Festivals - O-bon](#)
2. [The Japan Guy: What is Obon?](#)
3. [Kids Web Japan; Bon Holidays](#)
4. [O-Bon in Pictures](#)
5. [Diplomat: Obon - Japan Welcomes the Ancestors \(And Other Spirits Too\)](#)

Saturday, 14 July, 2018

RATHA YATRA *Hindu*

'Chariot journey'. This is observed most notably at Puri in the Indian state of Orissa, where processions of thousands of devotees pull huge waggons (*rathas*) supporting images of Krishna. He is known under the name of 'Jagannath', (Lord of the Universe), from which the English term 'juggernaut' comes. Krishna is attended on his journey by his brother and sister. The festival and others like it are celebrated in Britain with processions through various parts of London on appropriate Sundays.

a) p 123; b) pp 68-69, 75, 79-80.

More information at ...

1. [Rath Yatra - the Chariot Festival of Puri](#)
2. [ISKCON UK: Ratha Yatra - Festival of the Chariots](#)
3. [Harekrnsna: The Ratha Yatra](#)
4. [Rath Yatra: The Chariot Festival of Puri, with photos](#)
5. [Swaminarayan: Rath Yatra](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 15 July, 2018/Monday, 16 July 2018

CHOKOR (also CHO KOR DU CHEN) Buddhist

Chökhör Düchen, the festival of 'Turning the Wheel of Dharma', is one of the four major Tibetan Buddhist holidays. It is a Tibetan and Nepalese festival that commemorates the first teaching (*the turning of the wheel of law*) given by the historical Buddha. It is a colourful and relaxed mid-summer festival, when statues of the Buddha and copies of the scriptures, engraved on narrow, rectangular wooden blocks, are carried round the district with music and jollity, symbolising the promulgation of the Buddha's teaching. The whole community, clerical and lay, male and female, joins in the processions and the picnics.

For eight weeks after his enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, the Buddha did not give any teaching, even though Buddhist belief holds that one attains enlightenment in order to help other sentient beings. The normal explanation of this suggests that at that time there were no beings present who had sufficient 'good *karma*' to receive such important teachings from the Buddha. Other stories suggest that the Indian gods Indra and Brahma presented him with gifts and pleaded with him to begin his teaching. In the event the Buddha 'Turned the Wheel of Dharma' for the first time, at the Deer Park in Sarnath, near Varanasi, by expounding the 'Four Noble Truths'.

He gave this first teaching to five of his companions from his earlier time of practising asceticism. They had previously left him on the banks of the Niranjana river after becoming disillusioned with him for giving up his practice of austerities. When they saw him once again, they were overwhelmed by his presence, and their curiosity was such that they could not resist asking him to explain what had happened. The Buddha taught them the Four Noble Truths which have remained the basis of all traditions of Buddhism. He talked with them all through the night, and when morning came, these first five students took refuge with him in the Three Jewels: the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* and the *Sangha*. Together with the Buddha, they became the first members of the *Sangha*, the community of practitioners who follow the teachings of the Buddha, and they became enlightened *arhats*. At this time of year Buddhists today reflect on and seek to follow their example.

45 years after that first gathering, 1250 enlightened personal disciples of the Buddha came spontaneously to the Bamboo Grove at Rajagaha on the full moon of Magha (usually in late February or early March). This was one of the earliest large gatherings of Buddhists, and this was when the Buddha taught the principles of the *Dharma* and set out his teachings to the assembled *arahats* (enlightened monks) for them to study, learn and follow.

'*Duchen*' means 'great occasion' and like Chotrul Düchen, Saga Dawa Duchen, and Lhabab Düchen, Chokor Duchen is regarded as a 'ten million multiplier' day, multiplying the effects of all positive and negative actions ten million times! Together these four major Tibetan Buddhist holidays mark the four events known as the 'great deeds' of the Buddha. The first is Chotrul Duchen, and celebrates the time when the Buddha is said to have displayed a different miracle each day to spur on his disciples. Next is Saga Dawa, which remembers the Buddha's enlightenment, death and *parinirvana*. The third is Chokhor Duchen, which commemorates the Buddha's first sermon and the teaching of the Four Noble Truths.

In Tibet Chokor Duchen is a day of pilgrimage when believers visit particularly holy spots to leave offerings of incense and prayer flags. The whole community, monks and lay people alike, join in processions bearing statues of the Buddha and copies of the scriptures. They make much use of *Chokhors* or prayer wheels, which are common religious objects in Tibet, a normal part of daily life for all Tibetan Buddhists. These hand held wheels contain hollow wooden or metal cylinders attached to a handle. When turned, these are believed to spread spiritual blessing. Mantras - such as *Om Mani Padme Hum* - believed to evoke the attention and blessings of Shakyamuni, the Buddha of Compassion - may be printed or etched on the cylinder, and each revolution is said to equal one repetition or prayer. Larger prayer wheels are also lined up on racks along the paths circling the monasteries or at other sites so that passing pilgrims can set them into motion. More information at ...

1. [chokhor duchen-one of the four great Tibetan holy days](#)
2. [Chokor du Chen – Buddha Multiplying Day](#)
3. [Mythic Maps: Chokor Duchen](#)
4. [Tibet Travel: Festivals - Chokor Duchen](#)
5. [Blogspot: Dream of my guru on Chokhor Duchen](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 18 July, 2018

NAVROZE / NO RUZ *Zoroastrian (Kadmi)*

New Year's Day on the Shenshai Calendar. In the tenth century a group of Zoroastrians fled from Iran and were given religious sanctuary by the Hindus of Western India, where they became known as Parsis (or Persians). During the twentieth century the Zoroastrians of Iran have revised their calendar to take account of the leap year, while the Parsis of India have continued following the traditional imperial or Shenshai calendar. By the twentieth century the Parsis of India had become the largest group in the world to practise Zoroastrianism, and in the twenty first century over 95% of Zoroastrians in the UK are Parsis. Like their Indian counterparts, they celebrate two new years – giving more time for making merry!

a) pp 252-253; b) 127-128, 130-132, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Zoroastrian Heritage - Papeti - Navroze/No Ruz](#)
2. [Navroz - the Ismaili celebration](#)
3. [Navroze Special - A Parsi Feast awaits you](#)
4. [Parsi good will messages for Navroze](#)
5. [Iran Chamber Society: No-Rooz, The Iranian New Year at Present Times](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 22 July, 2018

TISHA B'AV *Jewish*

This is the saddest day of the Jewish calendar. A full day fast is held at the conclusion of three weeks of mourning, while reflecting on the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem. Other tragedies in Jewish history are also recalled, many of which have coincidentally happened on this day. The Book of Lamentations is read at this time.

a) pp 208-209; b) pp 106-107, 109.

More information at ...

1. [The Laws of Tisha B'Av](#)
2. [Jewfaq: Tisha B'Av](#)
3. [Reform Judaism: Tishah B'Av](#)
4. [Tisha B'Av - the Ninth day of Av](#)
5. [My Jewish Learning - Tisha B'Av](#)

Monday, 23 July, 2018

BIRTHDAY OF HAILE SELASSIE I *Rastafarian*

This is one of the holiest days of the Ethiopian year. It is celebrated widely throughout Ethiopia. Wherever Rastafarians live, they rejoice to honour the birthday of their king with *Nyahbinghi* drumming, hymns and prayers. Born in 1892 as Tafari Mahonnen, Ras Tafari ruled Ethiopia as regent and crown prince from 1916 to 1928, and in 1930 was crowned emperor. This was when he became his Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I, a name that means 'Power of the Trinity'.

Haile Selassie was Ethiopia's 225th and last emperor, serving from 1930 until his overthrow in 1974 by the Marxist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam. He traced his line back to Menelik I, who was credited with being the child of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. His birth had been foretold by astrologers, who foretold the great drought that started in 1889 and was broken at the moment of the child's birth, thus confirming his identity and destiny. His teachers were astounded at the depth of his knowledge and his understanding of ancient Indic religious texts. It is claimed that he could also converse with animals, and that savage beasts became docile in his presence. He was a skilled linguist, who learnt to read and write in Amharic and Ge'ez - and also in French.

For a country trying to gain its foothold in the world and seeking to curry favour with the West, the progressive Ras Tafari came to symbolize the hopes and dreams of Ethiopia's younger population. In 1923 he led Ethiopia into the League of Nations. The following year, he travelled to Europe, becoming the first Ethiopian ruler to go abroad.

Many of the Jamaican descendants of former slaves regarded Ethiopia as the symbol of all Africa, so the crowning of the new emperor was regarded as a highly propitious event. The Rastafari movement emerged in the 1930s, in large part inspired by the vision of Marcus Garvey and focussed on the belief that Haile Selassie was a divine being and the redeemer of the black people. Although the anticipated mass repatriation to Africa has not occurred, the movement has spread throughout much of the world, largely through immigration and the interest generated by reggae music - most notably, that of Bob Marley. For the more than a million Rastafarians worldwide, the anniversary of the birth of Haile Selassie is considered one of the most significant days of the Rasta year.

More information at ...

1. [The birth and childhood of Haile Selassie I](#)
2. [Biography of Haile Selassie I](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Birthday of Haile Selassie](#)
4. [Photos of Haile Selassie I](#)
5. [Brainy Quotes: Haile Selassie I](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 23 July, 2018 Zoroastrian (Kadmi)

Monday, 26 March, 2018 Zoroastrian (Iranian)

KHORDAD SAL Zoroastrian

Khordad Sal is the Birthday of Zarathushtra and falls on the sixth day following NoRuz. *Khordad* means perfection and the festival of Khordad Sal symbolically celebrates the birthday of Prophet Zarathushtra. It is customary on this day to visit the Fire Temple, to give thanks to Ahura Mazda for giving humanity the Prophet Zarathushtra, to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, to listen to stories of the miraculous birth and life of Prophet Zarathushtra, and to share in a happy community meal, a drink and a dance.

a) pp 253, 255; b) pp 128-132.

More information at ...

1. [Observe the Greater Noruz on Khordad Sal](#)
2. [A History of Khordad Sal](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Khordad Sal](#)
4. [Sakshigopal: Happy Khordad Sal! Birthday Day of Zoroaster!](#)
5. [Khordad Sal celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Lord Zoroaster](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 27 July, 2018

ASALHA PUJA /DHAMMA DAY Buddhist

Dhammacakka day - 'The turning of the wheel of teaching'. This is a Theravada celebration of the First Proclamation by Gautama to five ascetics in the Deer Park near Benares. Although he was initially reluctant to teach, he finally rejoined his five friends, with whom he had previously spent several years travelling throughout the Ganges plain, and in their presence he gained enlightenment. He then spoke to them at length and taught them the Middle Way, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths, the essence of all subsequent Buddhist teaching. He also ordained them as his followers, the first step towards the foundation of the Sangha of Buddhist monks.

The main activity that takes place on this day is the chanting of the discourse known as the Dhamma Cakka Sutta (the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Truth). This would usually be in the original Pali language. The month of Asalha marks the beginning of the three months long retreat period for Buddhist monks, a period of meditation and restraint, though it is also a time when lay Buddhists offer a variety of gifts to the monks. It is also the month in which the Buddha's son, Rahula, was born.

a) p 47; b) pp 24, 31, i, ii.

More information at ...

1. [Buddhist Festivals - Asalha Puja](#)
2. [Everything you need to know about Buddhist Asalha Puja day](#)
3. [My Triple Blog: Asalha Puja Day](#)
4. [Asalha Puja in Pictures](#)
5. [Battaya Mail: Thai Buddhists nationwide perform religious rites on Asalha Puja Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

August 2018

Here is the eighth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

August 2018

SRI AUROBINDO GHOSE

1872-1950

Born into a Bengali Hindu background in Calcutta, he was sent to England at the age of 9, where his studies included a scholarship to King's College, Cambridge. He became adept in several European languages, widely read and suspicious of religion, returning to India after 14 years, initially to work in state administration, to publish poetry and engage in local politics. He was imprisoned for his campaigning against British rule. The beliefs which led to his political engagement subsequently led him to deepen and transform his own and others lives. For almost 40 years he lived in Pondicherry, practising a distinctive version of Yoga designed to bring into human reality a present sense of divine being. This became central to the life of an ashram, further developed by his French collaborator, known as 'The Mother' - Mirra Richard. The ashram formed the basis of Auroville - a town still dedicated to the universal realisation of human unity, a vision set out in his extensive writings.

Biography

<http://savitrithepoem.com/the-poem/authors-biography.html>

<http://hinduism.about.com/od/gurussaintsofthepast/a/aurobindo.htm>

His writings

www.aurobindo.net

Fusion of spiritual and political

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/spiritual-violence-and-the-divine-revolution-of-sri-aurobindo-ghosh>

His Ashram

www.sriurobindoashram.org

A model town: Auroville

www.auroville.org

Video clips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqd7X6IpXNY> his educational philosophy

Wednesday, 1 August, 2018

LAMMAS/LUGHNASADH (pronounced Loo-nassa) Wiccan

LUGHNASADH Pagan

Lughnasadh, otherwise called *Lammas*, is the time of the corn harvest, when Pagans reap whatever they have sown and when they celebrate the fruits of the mystery of Nature. At Lughnasadh, Pagans give thanks for the bounty of the Goddess as Queen of the Land. Lammas is the first harvest, a time for gathering in and giving thanks for abundance; then Mabon or the Autumn Equinox is the Second Harvest of Fruit; and Samhain is the third and Final Harvest of Nuts and Berries.

With the coming of Christianity to the Celtic lands, the old festival of Lughnasadh took on Christian symbolism. Loaves of bread were baked from the first of the harvested grain and placed on the church altar on the first Sunday of August. The Christianized name for the feast of Lughnasadh is Lammas which means "loaf mass".

But this is also the major festival of Lugh, or Lug, the great Celtic Sun King and God of Light. August is His sacred month when He initiated great festivities in honour of His mother, Tailtiu. Feasting, market fairs, games and bonfire celebrations are the order of the day. Circle dancing, reflecting the movement of the sun in sympathetic magic, is popular, as are all community gatherings. August is considered an auspicious month for handfastings and weddings.

At Lammas the Goddess is in Her aspect as Grain Mother, Harvest Mother, Harvest Queen, Earth Mother, Ceres and Demeter. Demeter, as Corn Mother, represents the ripe corn of this year's harvest and her daughter Persephone/Kore represents the grain - the seed which drops back deep into the dark earth, hidden throughout the winter, to reappear in the spring as new growth. So as the grain harvest is gathered in, there is food to feed the community through the winter and within that harvest is the seed of next year's rebirth, regeneration and harvest. The Grain Mother is ripe and full; heavily pregnant she carries the seed of the new year's Sun God within her. This is the deep core meaning of Lammas and evokes the fullness and fulfilment of the present harvest, holding at its heart the seed of all future harvests.

But underlying this is the knowledge that the bounty and energy of Lugh, of the Sun, is now beginning to wane. It is a time when the year changes and shifts. Active growth is slowing down and the darker days of winter and reflection are beckoning. There is tension here. For Lugh, the Sun God, the God of the Harvest, the Green Man, or John Barleycorn, surrenders his life with the cutting of the corn. In the form of John Barleycorn, he is the living Spirit of the corn, or grain. As the corn is cut so John Barleycorn is cut down also. He surrenders his life so that others may be sustained by the grain, and so that the life of the community can continue. He is both eaten as the bread and is then reborn as the seed returns to the earth.

More information at ...

1. [The goddess and the green man - Lammas](#)
2. [Pagan/Wiccan: All About Lammas](#)
3. [The White Goddess: Lammas](#)
4. [Images for the Festival of Lammas](#)
5. [Mything Links: Lammas, Lughnasadh](#)

Monday, 6 August, 2018

THE TRANSFIGURATION *Christian (for Orthodox Julian Calendar see 19 August)*

This festival commemorates the occasion when Jesus went up a mountain with three of his disciples, Peter, James and John; here, as his death approached, they saw in a vision how his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white; they witnessed him in conversation with Moses and Elijah, and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased – listen to him'. For many Christians this account confirms the divine nature of Jesus.

For Orthodox Christians this is an especially important festival, pointing to Christ as both human and divine. Although Moses and Elijah had died centuries before, they could both live again in the presence of the Son of God, implying that a similar return to life can apply to all who face death.

Most scholars date the transfiguration of Jesus to the time of the Festival of Booths, the Jewish feast of God dwelling with his people. The celebration of the event in the Church became for Christians the New Testamental fulfilment of the Jewish feast of Sukkot in a way remarkably similar to the influence of the Jewish feasts of Passover and Pentecost on Christian celebrations.

The feast of the Transfiguration is currently observed on the 6th of August. The summer celebration of the feast lends itself well to the concept of transfiguration. The blessing on this day of grapes, as well as other fruits and vegetables, relates effectively to the paradisaical view of God's Kingdom where the whole earth will be transformed by the glory Jesus reveals here to his disciples.

The timing of the transfiguration is significant in the ministry of Jesus. Matthew 15:29 tells of the healing of the multitudes and the feeding of the 4000. This apparently prompted the Pharisees to wonder if Jesus was the Messiah, for they came to him asking for a sign (16:1ff). Jesus knew the disciples were harbouring the same expectations of him (cf. Luke 22:37-38 and Acts 1:6), and posed the famous question 'But who do you say that I am?'

Peter's answer in Matthew 16:16 was a great break-through, and Jesus commended Peter for it (v.17). He wanted his disciples to believe that he was the Son of God, the Messiah. Then, immediately after Peter's confession, Jesus announced, for the first time in an explicit way, his coming death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21), indicating the nature of his Messiahship.

It is in this context of this discovery made by the disciples that the transfiguration story falls. Six days went by after Peter's confrontation with Jesus. Then he took Peter, James, and John up 'to a high mountain' (possibly Mount Tabor?) where they witnessed a wonderful sight: Jesus was glorified before their eyes. His body took on a different appearance (Matt. 17:2).

Then there appeared Moses and Elijah. These two characters fit perfectly into this scene. Moses was the great lawgiver in Israelite history, but he was also the first of God's great prophets (cf. Deut 18:14ff). Elijah was a great prophet too. Furthermore, both of them saw an appearance of God in their lifetimes (Moses: Exod 33:17ff; Elijah: 1 Kings 19:9ff), and both of these occurred on a mountain (Mt. Sinai). Both of them, like Jesus, had performed mighty works in the name of the Lord God of Israel, and both had experienced, to some degree, the rejection of their own people. These two characters have symbolic significance. Together they represent the Law and the Prophets, both of which pointed forwards to Jesus (cf. Rom. 3:21) and to his future suffering and exaltation.

Truly this is a festival to celebrate.

Matthew 17:1-17, Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36.

a) p 101; b) pp 106-107, 109.

More information at ...

1. [The Expository Files: The Transfiguration](#)
2. [The Orthodox Church in America - The Transfiguration](#)
3. [NC Register: 10 things you need to know about Jesus' Transfiguration](#)
4. [The Transfiguration, by Duccio](#)
5. [About Catholicism: The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 7th August, 2018 – Thursday, 16th August, 2018 (*Shahenshai*)

Sunday, 11 March, 2018 – Tuesday, 20 March, 2018 (*Iranian Zoroastrian*)

Sunday, 8 July, 2018 – Tuesday 17th July, 2018 (*Kadmi*)

FRAVARDIGAN / MUKTAD *Zoroastrian*

The Fravardigan festival (the festival of the *fravashis*), popularly known as *Muktad* (All Souls), commences ten days before NoRuz and is the last festival of the old year. The Zoroastrian day commences at sunrise and not midnight, and so during sunrise on the first day of the festival the immortal souls, together with their *fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors, artistically depicted as half man/half bird), are welcomed by name by the Zoroastrian *Mobeds* or *Magi* (priests).

For ten days they reside in the place of worship, hovering around a table full of metal vases, each specifically earmarked for an individual family and containing white flowers. They leave the physical world after the last ceremony, held on the tenth evening, but before the dawn of NoRuz. The designated priest - as a farewell gesture - will then empty the water from one of the metal vases, which he will also turn upside down, signifying that it is time for the immortal souls and the *fravashis* to return to the spiritual world.

Theologically Fravardigan is the most important Zoroastrian festival after NoRuz, and, since it deals with one's departed ancestors, many Zoroastrians regard it to be their holiest festival. This linking of the past with the present and the future is typical of much of Zoroastrian life.

During these ten days Zoroastrians often take time off from work, pray extensively, recite the five *Gathas* (hymns composed by Zarathushtra) and ensure their houses are thoroughly cleaned. They prepare daily samples of sacred food enjoyed by their departed ancestors while still alive, and take these to the place of worship, to be tasted by them during the daily ceremonies. This ritually consecrated food, along with chosen fruits, is then shared by the living in the special *Hamaspahmaidyem Gahambar*, a communal feast celebrated after the ceremony is over.

a) pp 250-252; b) pp 129-130, 144.

More information at ...

1. [The nature and meaning of Muktad](#)
2. [Muktad](#)
3. [Zoroastrian Heritage Institute - Pateti](#)
4. [Images for Fravardigan](#)
5. [What to do and pray during the Muktad](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 13 August, 2018 – Wednesday, 15 August, 2018

O-BON Japanese (in Tokyo – for rest of Japan, see 13 July)

A Japanese festival when the spirits of the departed are welcomed back home with feasting and dancing. Fires are often lit to illuminate their arrival and departure. Celebrations in rural areas may take place one month earlier.

a) pp 162-163; b) pp 82, 86-87, 89.

More information at ...

1. [Go Japan: Japanese Festivals - O-bon](#)
2. [The Japan Guy: What is Obon?](#)
3. [Kids Web Japan; Bon Holidays](#)
4. [O-Bon in Pictures](#)
5. [The Diplomat: Obon - Japan Welcomes the Ancestors \(And Other Spirits Too\)](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 13 August, 2018 – Wednesday, 22 August, 2018

1st to 10th DHUL-HIJJAH Muslim

For Muslims the first 10 days of the month of Dhul-Hijjah are held to be especially holy when good deeds are particularly rewarded by God. These days encompass the allotted days for the performance of the Hajj (pilgrimage) and the first day of Eid-ul-Adha (the feast of sacrifice).

More information at ...

1. [The Blessed Days of Dhul Hijjah](#)
2. [ICNA: Virtues of the First 10 Days of 'Dhul-Hijja'](#)
3. [The First Ten Days of Dhul Hijjah: Days of Virtue and Righteous Deeds](#)
4. [Virtues of the First Ten Days of Dhul-Hijjah](#)
5. [Islamic Relief: The Virtues of Dhul Hijjah](#)

Wednesday, 15 August, 2018

THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD *Christian (Orthodox)*

On this day, Eastern Orthodox Christians commemorate the passing of Mary, Mother of Christ, in the presence of the Apostles. Miraculously brought together at her house, Mary told the Apostles of the reason for their gathering, and comforted them. She raised her hands to pray for peace for the world, and blessed each apostle before giving up her spirit. The apostles buried Mary at Gethsemane, where Jesus had also been buried; but on the third day after the burial, when they were eating together, Mary appeared to them, saying "Rejoice". In this way, the apostles first learned that Mary's body had been taken up into Heaven, where Christ had already taken her spirit. When the apostles went to the grave, her body was gone, leaving a sweet fragrance. The symbolism of this event encompasses the idea of death as 'falling asleep' (this is what 'dormition' means), to be followed by eventual resurrection.

a) pp 97-98; b) pp 49, 55, 59.

More information at ...

1. [Orthodox Wiki: Dormition of the Mother of God](#)
2. [The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary](#)
3. [The Dormition of the Mother of God](#)
4. [The Church of the Dormition - Jerusalem or Antioch?](#)
5. [Russian Orthodox Church: Dormition of the Holy Virgin](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 15 August, 2018

ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *Christian (Roman Catholic)*

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *Christian (Anglican)*

DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD *Christian (Orthodox) (Julian Calendar: 28 August)*

On this day many Christians celebrate the 'taking up' of Mary, body and soul, to heaven. Several Catholic communities mark the festival of the Assumption with processions and fêtes.

a) pp 97-98; b) pp 49, 55, 59.

More information at

1. [The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)
2. [Catholic Culture: The Assumption of Our Lady](#)
3. [Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos](#)
4. [About Catholicism: Assumption of Mary](#)
5. [Time and Date: Assumption of Mary](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 17 August, 2018

NAVROZE / NO RUZ *Zoroastrian (Shahenshai)*

New Year's Day on the Shenshai Calendar. In the tenth century a group of Zoroastrians fled from Iran and were given religious sanctuary by the Hindus of Western India, where they became known as Parsis (or Persians). During the twentieth century the Zoroastrians of Iran have revised their calendar to take account of the leap year, while the Parsis of India have continued following the traditional imperial or Shenshai calendar. By the twentieth century the Parsis of India had become the largest group in the world to practise Zoroastrianism, and in the twenty first century over 95% of Zoroastrians in the UK are Parsis. Like their Indian counterparts, they celebrate two new years – giving more time for making merry!

a) pp 252-253; b) 127-128, 130-132, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Zoroastrian Heritage - Papeti - Navroze/No Ruz](#)
2. [Navroz - the Ismaili celebration](#)
3. [Navroze Special - A Parsi Feast awaits you](#)
4. [Parsi good will messages for Navroze](#)
5. [Iran Chamber Society: No-Rooz, The Iranian New Year at Present Times](#)

Friday, 17 August, 2018

HERD BOY AND WEAVING MAID FESTIVAL / QIXIJIE / CH'I HOU CHIEH Chinese

This Double Seven festival perpetuates an ancient Chinese (and Japanese) folk tale of two stars, one on either side of the Heavenly River (the Milky Way). They are held to have been a herd boy and a heavenly weaving maid who had married but were then separated by a river (formed by the use of a magic hairpin) when the maid was summoned to return to heaven. The lovers are allowed a reunion once a year on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, when a flock of magpies forms a bridge across the Heavenly River. But if it rains on that day, the river overflows and sweeps away the bridge, so preventing their meeting for a whole year. Women traditionally pray for clear skies on the night of the seventh day of the month.

There are several, varied versions of the story, most of them telling how the poor young farmer who looked after his herd of cows was taken to a lake where several women were bathing. He was told to steal the red clothing of the one who served a royal majesty by skilfully weaving clothes. The others fled but the weaver was promised the return of her clothes if she would marry the herd boy. After several happy years together she was forced to return to her heavenly home to continue her weaving, whereas he was trapped on the wrong side of the waters.

These legends portray and seek to explain several of the groupings of stars in the Milky Way, relating them to the various levels humans occupy in the social order and illustrating that the path to love is not always smooth.

a) p 70; b) p 43.

More information at ...

1. [Tai Chi Chuan Centre - Weaving Girl](#)
2. [World of Tales: Chinese Folk Tales - The Herd Boy and the Weaving Maiden](#)
3. [The Herd Boy and the Weaving Maid, and other Oriental Folk Tales](#)
4. [You Tube - The Cow Herd and the Weaving Maid and other stories](#)
5. [China Travel: Double Seventh Festival - Herd Boy and Weaving Maid](#)

Sunday, 19 August, 2018

THE TRANSFIGURATION *Christian (Orthodox - Julian Calendar)*

This festival commemorates the occasion when Jesus went up a mountain with three of his disciples, Peter, James and John; here, as his death approached, they saw his face change and his clothes become dazzling white. They witnessed him in conversation with Moses and Elijah, and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased – listen to him'. For many Christians this confirms the divine nature of Jesus.

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The feast of the Transfiguration is currently observed on the 6th of August. The summer celebration of the feast lends itself well to the concept of transfiguration. The blessing on this day of grapes, as well as other fruits and vegetables, relates effectively to the paradisaical view of God's Kingdom where the whole earth will be transformed by the glory Jesus reveals here to his disciples.

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Peter's answer in Matthew 16:16 was a great break-through, and Jesus commended Peter for it (v.17). He wanted his disciples to believe that he was the Son of God, the Messiah. Then, immediately after Peter's confession, Jesus announced, for the first time in an explicit way, his coming death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21), indicating the nature of his Messiahship.

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Then there appeared Moses and Elijah. These two characters fit perfectly into this scene. Moses was the great lawgiver in Israelite history, but he was also the first of God's great prophets (cf. Deut 18:14ff). Elijah was a great prophet too. Furthermore, both of them saw an appearance of God in their lifetimes (Moses: Exod 33:17ff; Elijah: 1 Kings 19:9ff), and both of these occurred on a mountain (Mt. Sinai). Both of them, like Jesus, had performed mighty works in the name of the Lord God of Israel, and both had experienced, to some degree, the rejection of their own people. These two characters have symbolic significance. Together they represent the Law and the Prophets, both of which pointed forwards to Jesus (cf. Rom. 3:21) and to his future suffering and exaltation.

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Matthew 17:1-17, Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36.

a) p 101; b) pp 106-107, 109.

More information at ...

1. [The Expository Files: The Transfiguration](#)
2. [The Orthodox Church in America - The Transfiguration](#)
3. [NC Register: 10 things you need to know about Jesus' Transfiguration](#)
4. [The Transfiguration, by Duccio](#)
5. [About Catholicism: The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 20 August, 2018 – Friday, 24 August, 2018

HAJJ / PILGRIMAGE TO MAKKAH (8th to 12th Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim

Hajj is an annual religious pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) undertaken each year by 2-3 million people. All Muslims are required to make this pilgrimage once in their lifetime (although there is no prohibition on making the pilgrimage more than once). Those who cannot afford to do so, or are prevented through ill-health may be excused. A series of ritual acts are performed by the pilgrims during the first two days of Hajj, followed by the three day long festival of Eid al-Adha which is celebrated in Makkah. *Umrah* is a separate and smaller pilgrimage involving the events of the first two days of hajj that can be completed at any time of the year, but can be preceded or followed by the rest of hajj if pilgrims so wish.

The origins of hajj date back to the Prophet Ibrahim, and it brings together Muslims of all schools, races and tongues for one of life's most moving spiritual experiences. According to the Qur'an, it was Ibrahim who, together with his son Isma'il (Ishmael), built the Ka'bah, 'the House of God,' the focal point toward which Muslims turn in their worship five times each day. Later, the Prophet Muhammad instructed believers in the rituals of the hajj, partly through his own example, but also with the support of his Companions. It is the fifth of the five 'pillars' of Islam, the central religious duties of the believer.

The Ka'bah, a large rectangular cube shaped building, covered in a black mantle which is decorated with elaborate gold calligraphy, is the focal point of all Muslims' prayers. It stands in the courtyard of Makkah's Sacred Mosque, where at the season of the hajj, the faithful gather for rituals that precede and end their pilgrimage.

For hajj men wear *ihram*, white seamless garments consisting of two pieces of cloth or towelling; one covers the body from waist to ankle and the other is thrown over the shoulder(s). This garb was worn by both Abraham and Muhammad. For *ihram* women generally wear a simple white dress that covers their bodies apart from their face and hands, and a head covering (but not a face veil – the face must be uncovered during hajj). Men's heads must be uncovered, but both men and women may use an umbrella to ward off the sun's rays.

When they arrive in Makkah, pilgrims perform the first essential rite of the hajj: the *tawaf*, the seven-fold anticlockwise circling of the Ka'bah, with a prayer recited during each circuit. While making their circuits, pilgrims may kiss or touch the famous Black Stone. This oval stone, some 11 by 15 inches in size, was damaged over the years and broken into several pieces, but is now held together inside a silver frame. It has a special place in the hearts of Muslims as, according to some traditions, it is the sole remnant of the original structure built by Ibrahim and Isma'il. But perhaps the single most important reason for kissing the stone is that the Prophet did so. After completing the *tawaf*, pilgrims pray, preferably at the Station of Ibrahim, the site where Ibrahim stood while he built the Ka'bah. Then they drink of the water of Zamzam.

Another ritual, sometimes performed later, after the feast of Eid al-Adha, is the *sa'i*, or 'the running.' This commemorates Hagar's frantic search for water to quench Isma'il's thirst. She ran back and forth seven times between two rocky hillocks, al-Safa and al-Marwah, until she found the sacred water known as Zamzam. This water, which sprang forth miraculously under Isma'il's tiny feet, is now enclosed in a marble chamber adjacent to the Ka'bah.

On the first day of the hajj, pilgrims leave Makkah and progress towards Mina, a small uninhabited village east of the city. Here they spend hours meditating and praying, as the Prophet did on his pilgrimages.

On the second day they leave Mina and travel to the plain of Arafat for the *wuquf*, 'the standing' which lasts throughout the rest of the day. This is the central rite of the hajj. Some gather at the Mount of Mercy, where the Prophet delivered his Farewell Sermon, announcing religious, economic, social and political reforms. Here the pilgrims spend hours in worship and supplication.

The Hajj (Cont on next page)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Just after sunset, they proceed en masse to Muzdalifah, an open plain about halfway between Arafat and Mina. First they pray and then they collect a fixed number of chickpea-sized pebbles to use on the following days.

Early on the third day they move from Muzdalifah to Mina, where they hurl seven of the pebbles they have previously collected at each of three white pillars that symbolise Satan. They recall the story of Satan's attempt to persuade Ibrahim to disregard God's command to sacrifice his son.

Next each family sacrifices a goat, sheep or some other animal. They give the meat to the poor while, in some cases, they keep a small portion for themselves. This is the start of the celebration of Eid ul-Adha, and is also associated with Ibrahim's readiness to sacrifice his son in accordance with God's wish, and Isma'îl's willingness to accept his fate as the will of God. This act reminds the pilgrim to share worldly goods with those who are less fortunate, and serves as an act of thanksgiving to God. They are now allowed to shed their *ihram* and put on everyday clothes.

While they remain in Mina, pilgrims revisit Makkah to perform another essential rite of the hajj: the farewell *tawaf*, the seven-fold anticlockwise circling of the Ka'bah, with a prayer recited during each circuit. If they have not already done so, they now perform the ritual known as the *sa'i*, 'the running.'

Once these rites are performed, the pilgrims may resume all normal activities. They can, from now on, proudly claim the title of al-*Hajj* or *Hajji* or, in the case of women, *Hajjah*.
More information at ...

1. [Hajj Fact Sheet](#)
2. [Islamic City: Hajj - The Journey of a Lifetime](#)
3. [Why do Millions Gather in Mecca Every Year?](#)
4. [Hajj in Photos](#)
5. [The Guardian - Hajj](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 21 August, 2018

YAUM-ARAFAH / THE DAY OF ARAFAT (9th Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim

This day marks the culminating event of the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah. Muslims who are on *Hajj* spend the day in prayer on Mount Arafat to commemorate the end of the revelation of the *Qur'an* to the Prophet. Those not on *Hajj* are also expected to pray and to fast.

Surah 5: 4

pp 223

a) -224; b) pp116-117.

More information at ...

1. [Al Maghrib: The Truth Behind the Day of Arafah and its Name](#)
2. [Arab News: The Day of Arafat](#)
3. [Pilgrims throng Mount Arafat in Makkah](#)
4. [The Day of Arafat in Pictures and Photos](#)
5. [Arafat](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 22 August, 2018 – Saturday, 25 August, 2018

EID-UL-ADHA/THE FESTIVAL OF SACRIFICE (10th Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim

This major festival (*al-Eid al-Kabir*) marks the end of the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage to Makkah) on the tenth day of the twelfth month of *Dhul-Hijjah*. The *Hajj* is the last of the five pillars of Islam. Pilgrims performing *Hajj* sacrifice animals at the village of Mina on their way back to Makkah from Mount Arafat (where they have spent the first day of the festival). This commemorates Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son, Ismail. All over the world Muslims also sacrifice an animal, if they can afford it. They share out the meat among family, friends and the poor, who normally each get a third share.

Eid normally starts with Muslims going to the Mosque for prayers, dressed in their best clothes, and thanking Allah for all the blessings they have received. It is also a time when they visit family and friends as well as offering each other presents. At Eid it is obligatory to give a set amount of money to charity, often to be used to help poor people buy new clothes and food so that they too can celebrate.

All physically fit Muslims who can afford it are expected to make the visit to Makkah, in Saudi Arabia, at least once in their lives. Every year around 2 million Muslims from all over the world converge on Makkah. They stand before the Kaaba, a shrine built by Ibrahim, praising Allah together, and walk seven times anticlockwise around the Kaaba. The pilgrims or *Hajjis*, as they are called, wear simple white, two piece clothes called *Ihram* which promote the bonds of Islamic brotherhood and sisterhood by showing that everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah.

Obedience to the will of Allah, emulation of the Prophet's example and instruction, sharing equally with brother and sister Muslims, caring for the poor and needy, sharing with delight in this annual family celebration, these are what makes Eid ul Adha such a special time, the most significant celebration in the Islamic calendar.

Surah 37:99-111, 22:26-33 and 3:96-97.

a) pp 224-227; b) pp 111-112, 114-115, 117-118, 120, 137, 143.

More information at ...

1. [The Meaning of the Islamic festival of Sacrifice](#)
2. [Making Sacrifice on Eid ul Adha](#)
3. [Eid ul Adha for Schools](#)
4. [123 Greetings: Eid ul Adha](#)
5. [Ahadith: Search for Hadith on Eid ul Adha - 30 results](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 22 August, 2018 Zoroastrian (Shenshai)

Monday, 26 March, 2018 Zoroastrian (Iranian)

KHORDAD SAL Zoroastrian

The Birthday of Zarathushtra is one of the most important of Zoroastrian celebrations. Although the actual date of his birth cannot be accurately identified, the festival of Khordad Sal symbolically celebrates the birthday of Prophet Zarathushtra.

Khordad means perfection, and it is customary on this day to visit the Fire Temple to give thanks to Ahura Mazda, the Persian name for the one God, for giving humanity the ideal gift of the Prophet Zarathushtra. His followers participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony; listen to stories of his miraculous birth and life; and then celebrate with a lavish community meal, a drink and a dance.

On Khordad Sal Parsis clean their houses, hang *torans* of fresh flowers in the doorways, and create designs made of chalk on the floors (called *rangoli*). They wear new clothes, cook traditional foods, exchange gifts and salute each other with the greeting: Khordad Sal Mubarak! Prayers are offered and are followed by festive parties to give thanks for and celebrate the soul that evinced a philosophy of life that is both giving and fulfilling.

Zarathustra's ideas (monotheism tempered by belief in the Devil, the struggle between Good and Evil, a final judgement) greatly influenced today's major world religions, particularly Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i tradition. The Zoroastrian faith has endured many hardships, the most significant being the invasion into Iran by Alexander and later, the Arab conquest of Iran. Though greatly diminished in numbers, Zarathustra's followers have continued to honour his revolutionary teachings for over 3000 years.

Parsi families come together during the festivities that are put on during Khordad Sal – if families are unable to be together then prayers are offered for those who are not in attendance. It is an important celebration for the Parsi community, and because family (and community) is central to the themes of Zoroastrianism, guests are invited to participate in the festivities. Parsis also take the time during Khordad Sal to be introspective. They seek ways to improve the lives of others and themselves.

a) pp 252-255; b) pp 130-132, 31.

More information at ...

1. [Observe the Greater Noruz on Khordad Sal](#)
2. [A History of Khordad Sal](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Khordad Sal](#)
4. [Sakshigopal: Happy Khordad Sal! Birthday Day of Zoroaster!](#)
5. [Khordad Sal celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Lord Zoroaster](#)

Saturday, 25 August, 2018

FESTIVAL OF HUNGRY GHOSTS / ZHOHGYUANJIE / CHUNG YUAN Chinese

Chinese Buddhist and ancestral festival, often called the 'Festival of Hungry Ghosts'. Paper objects for use in the spirit world are made and offered to aid those spirits who have no resting place or descendants. Large paper boats are made and burnt at temples to help these spirits on their journey across the sea of torment to Nirvana.

Buddhists and Taoists participate in rituals throughout the Hungry Ghost Month but particularly on the Hungry Ghost Festival. It is thought that the gates of hell are open throughout the Hungry Ghost Month, but that they are most open on this night. It is believed hungry and wayward ghosts often come to visit the living.

Many believers refrain from going out after the dark for fear they may encounter a ghost. They are also extra cautious near water as the ghosts of people who die by drowning are considered particularly troublesome, especially when they wander around the living world.

The Hungry Ghost Festival often begins with a parade where decorated lanterns in various shapes, including boats and houses, are placed on decorated floats. The paper lanterns are then carried to the water, lit, and released. The glowing lanterns and boats are meant to give directions to lost souls and help ghosts and deities find their way to the food offerings. The paper lanterns eventually catch fire and sink.

At some Hungry Ghost festivals, as Keelung in Taiwan, a Chinese character of a family's last name is placed on the lantern that the family has sponsored. It is believed the further the lantern floats on the water, the more good fortune the family will have in the coming year.

Offering food and support to ancestors and their spirits brings fulfilment, both to those who perform it and to those whose role is to be recipients of it.

a) pp 70, 72; b) p 43.

More information at ...

1. [About Chinese Culture: The Hungry Ghost Festival](#)
2. [About Mandarin: Ghost Month and Ghost Festival](#)
3. [Discover Hong Kong. Festivals/Chinese - The Hungry Ghosts festival](#)
4. [Images of Hungry Ghosts](#)
5. [Bukit Brown: 'Hungry Ghost Month' - Reflections](#)

Sunday, 26 August, 2018

RAKSHA BANDHAN Hindu

This festival takes place on the full moon of the month of Shravana. Raksha means 'protection' and *bandhan* means 'to tie'. Girls and married women in families which come from a north Indian background tie a *rakhi* (amulet) on the right wrists of their brothers, wishing them protection from all sorts of evil influences of various kinds. The brothers in return promise to protect their sisters and offer them gifts and sweets. This ritual not only strengthens the bond of love between brothers and sisters, but also reinforces the unity of the family.

Rakhis are traditionally simple, colourful bracelets made of interwoven red and gold threads. Some of them feature precious silk, beautifully crafted with gold and silver threads, embroidered with sequins and studded with semi-precious stones.

The key to understanding Raksha Bandhan is to know that it is marked by happiness and excitement, especially for young girls and women. Preparations for the festival begin well in advance. Then, on the Raksha Bandhan day, the festivities start at day break. Everyone is ready early and they gather for the worship of the deities. After invoking the blessings of the gods, the sister performs 'brother's *arti*', puts a *tika* on his forehead and ties her *rakhi* amidst the chanting of *mantras*. Then she gives him sweets and gifts. The brother accepts her offerings and vows to take care of her and be by her side in the time of her need. As a token he gives the sister a return gift and sweets. The family reunion itself is sufficient reason for celebrations, marked by . Tasty dishes, sweets, gifts, song and dance.

This is a universal opportunity for reunion and celebration. People exchange gifts and share exotic dishes and wonderful sweets. For those who are not able to meet each other, *rakhi* cards, e-rakhis and *rakhis* sent by post perform alternative ways of communicating the *rakhi* messages. Handmade *rakhis* are bought and sold, and homemade *rakhi* cards are increasingly frequent. It is typically a Hindu festival but nowadays people from different faiths celebrate it too.

No Hindu festival is complete without these typical Indian festivities, the gatherings, celebrations, exchange of sweets and gifts, lots of noise, singing and dancing. Raksha Bandhan has now become a regional celebration of just this sort to celebrate the sacred relationship between brothers and sisters. It is celebrated in different forms in different areas of India and is also known by different names. So. for example, in western Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa, Hindus offer coconuts to the sea god, Lord Varuna, and the festival is accordingly called Nariyal Purnima, coconut full-moon.

Throughout the country, but especially in north and western India, females tie *rakhis* around the wrists of boys and men who have no sisters. A man might acquire a sister who in every respect is such except in biological fact; or a woman may tie a *rakhi* around the wrist of her male first cousin who is without sisters. Indian texts are replete with the observation that men should look upon women as their sisters and mothers.

a) pp 69-70 b) 139-140.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: Raksha Bandhan](#)
2. [Society for the Confluence of Festivals in India: Raksha Bandhan](#)
3. [Indif Devotional: Raksha Bandhan - The Festival of Brotherhood and Love](#)
4. [Maps of India: Raksha Bandhan](#)
5. [Culture: Festivals - Rakhi \(Raksha Bandhan\)](#)

Tuesday, 28 August, 2018

THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD *Christian (Orthodox – Julian Calendar)*

On this day, Eastern Orthodox Christians commemorate the passing of Mary, Mother of Christ, in the presence of the Apostles. Miraculously brought together at her house, Mary told the Apostles of the reason for their gathering, and comforted them. She raised her hands to pray for peace for the world, and blessed each apostle before giving up her spirit. The apostles buried Mary at Gethsemane, where Jesus had also been buried; but on the third day after the burial, when they were eating together, Mary appeared to them, saying "Rejoice". In this way, the apostles first learned that Mary's body had been taken up into Heaven, where Christ had already taken her spirit. When the apostles went to the grave, her body was gone, leaving a sweet fragrance. The symbolism of this event encompasses the idea of death as 'falling asleep' (this is what 'dormition' means), to be followed by eventual resurrection.

a) pp 97-98; b) pp 49, 55, 59.

More information at ...

1. [Orthodox Wiki: Dormition of the Mother of God](#)
2. [The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary](#)
3. [The Dormition of the Mother of God](#)
4. [Dormition of the Theotokos](#)
5. [Russian Orthodox Church: Dormition of the Holy Virgin](#)

Thursday 30 August, 2018

THE FESTIVAL OF THE POOL/EID UL GHADEER (or GHADIR) (18^h Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim (Shi'a)

This is a festival observed by Shi'a Muslims, for whom it is an extremely important day. It commemorates an event shortly before the death of the Prophet. While returning from Makkah to Medina after his final pilgrimage, accompanied by many thousands of his followers, the Prophet stopped at an oasis (the pool of Khumm) to deliver a sermon. While preaching, he is believed (by Shi'a Muslims) to have raised the hand of Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, and proclaimed, 'For whoever I am his leader, Ali is his leader. O God, love those who love him, and be hostile to those who are hostile to him'.

Immediately after this statement the Prophet revealed an *ayah* (a verse) of the Qur'an: 'Today I have perfected your religion and completed my favour upon you, and I was satisfied that Islam be your religion' (*Qur'an* 5, 3.) For Shi'a Muslims the 'perfecting' of the religion of Islam was the announcement concerning Ali, which they understand to be his clear appointment to be successor to the prophet as the spiritual and temporal leader of Islam. This sermon was preached by a pool (*ghadir*) in an area known as Khumm.

Since Eid ul Ghadir commemorates the Prophet Muhammad's last sermon, preached as it was in the desert whilst returning from *Hajj* (pilgrimage), it is viewed as being authoritative by members of the Shi'a community. The implication of the statement in the Prophet's sermon (that Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, would be the first Caliph of Islam) is that the leadership of Islam would remain within the Prophet's bloodline, the foundation for a line of Caliphs who would succeed the Prophet. It has become the source of many current divisions between Sunni and Shi'a communities throughout the Muslim world.

The Shi'a Ismaili tradition bears witness to the continuity of the authority vested at *Ghadir Khumm*. The hereditary *Imamat* has continued for over 1,400 years, from *Hazrat* Ali to the present Imam-of-the-Time, *Mawlana* Shah Karim al-Hussaini Aga Khan, who is the 49th hereditary Imam and direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad through *Hazrat* Ali and *Hazrat* Bibi Fatima.

In commemorating Eid ul Ghadir, the *Jamat* celebrates the seminal event of *Ghadir Khumm*, also reaffirming their allegiance to the Imam-of-the-Time as the direct lineal successor and inheritor of the authority of *Hazrat* Ali.

More information at ...

1. [Islamic Occasions - Eid ul Ghadeer](#)
2. [The Ismaili: Eid-e Ghadir](#)
3. [Ziaaraat: Significance of Eid-e-Ghadeer](#)
4. [Slide Share: Eid Alghadeer](#)
5. [Seratonline: Why do Shias celebrate Eid-e- Ghadeer?](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

September 2018

Here is the ninth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

September 2018

ELIE WIESEL

1928 – 2016

Elie Wiesel was a great writer and campaigner for minority rights internationally. Born in Romania and evacuated to France from Germany after the end of WW2, at the age of 14 and 15 he was in the death camps of Auschwitz and Buchenwald. There he lost his parents and his younger sister; he saw what even educated people could do to others. He anguished over the global fate of fellow Jews and its human and religious meaning then and since. Though for many years his experience was too horrifically powerful to put into words, he eventually expressed it in his book *The Night* and his play *The Trial of God*. He continued to write and teach mainly in universities in the USA. There and globally in the award of Nobel Peace Prize, he was widely esteemed. Sadly in his last years he was victim of the Madoff Ponzi scheme.

Nobel documentation

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-facts.html

His life and work

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/elie-wiesel

A personal speech

<http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/wiesel.htm>

Some classroom schemes

<https://uk.pinterest.com/explore/night-by-elie-wiesel/?lp=true>

Video clips

www.teachertube.com/mobile/video/elie-wieseel-158229

some life photos

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/the-enduring-legacy-of-elie-wiesel-holocaust-survivor-and-nobel-laureate/>

his enduring legacy

<http://www.org/video/2279122418>

his changing beliefs

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

*** Sunday, Sept/Oct, 2018**

HARVEST FESTIVAL *Christian (Western, Anglican and Free Churches)*

Special services are held around this time of year to give thanks for the goodness of God's gifts in providing a harvest of crops along with all the other fruits of society. Displays of produce are often made, usually distributed afterwards to those in need. Increasingly the emphasis is on a wider interpretation than just the harvests of the fields and seas.

a) p 82; b) p 54.

More information at ...

1. [Barnabas: God is a faithful gardener](#)
2. [Ten amazing harvest festivals from around the world](#)
3. [Activity Village - Suggestions for the Harvest Festival](#)
4. [Images of Harvest Festival Celebrations](#)
5. [Send a Cow: Harvest Festival](#)

Saturday, 1 September, 2018

INSTALLATION OF THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB IN THE HARMANDIR SAHIB,

Amritsar 1604 CE *Sikh*

In 1604 CE, in the place of worship where the Golden Temple now stands, Guru Arjan Dev, the Sikhs' fifth Guru, installed the Adi Granth, a newly compiled volume of scripture. It consisted of the hymns of the first five Gurus plus those of other Indian and Persian 'saint-poets' from the Hindu and Muslim traditions. After the selections were made, the Guru dictated the hymns to Bhai Gurdas, who wrote down the words and music of the Adi Granth. Guru Arjan later suffered a martyr's death, preferring to save his life rather than make alterations to the hymns, as required by Emperor Jahangir.

Having compiled the Granth, the Guru placed it in the newly-built *Harmandir Sahib* (Golden Temple) in Amritsar. He nominated Bhai Buddha as the custodian of the Granth. The Guru bowed before the collection, acknowledging the higher authority of the written words to the personal importance and significance which he possessed as Guru. After this time, he no longer sat at a level above the Granth, but below it. He also instituted daily public worship at the *Harmandir Sahib*, where the Granth was recited all day long to the accompaniment of stringed musical instruments.

The second version of the Granth was prepared by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706 CE. He dictated the entire Guru Granth Sahib from memory to Bhai Mani Singh, re-editing the Adi Granth to the form in which it is found today. He removed several unauthenticated writings and added four hymns for evening prayers and several from his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Otherwise, the Granth was left as it was before in the days of Guru Arjan. Sikhs regard the Guru Granth Sahib as their living Guru – hence the importance of this celebration. Since his day the Guru Granth Sahib consists of 1430 pages and 5864 verses. Its spiritual teachings are referred to as *bani* or *gurbani*.

In all gurdwaras and many Sikh homes, the Guru Granth Sahib is read every day. No Sikh ceremony is regarded as complete unless it is performed in the presence of the Granth. Sikhs frequently receive a hukam or divine order through one of the hymns chosen at random from the left hand pages of the Guru Granth Sahib. Similarly, at the end of a service, after the *ardas* prayers, the Granth is opened at random and a portion is read. On special occasions, the Guru Granth Sahib is recited non-stop from cover to cover by a string of readers. It requires nearly 48 hours to complete the continuous reading, which is known as an *akhand path*. This can be performed on any important occasion, and is regarded as the highest and noblest ceremony in the Sikh religion.

The Guru Granth Sahib is a remarkable storehouse of spiritual knowledge and teachings which does not prescribe any rites or rituals but stresses meditation on the Name of God. Most of the hymns are addressed to God and often describe the devotee's condition: his aspirations and yearning, his agony in separation and his longing to be with the Lord. There are no mythological narratives, although God is described in anthropomorphic terms, and the Gurus are not afraid to use the imagery of family relationships to describe the union of God and man. Whether in Temple, Gurdwara or home, the Guru Granth Sahib has become the focal point of all Sikh worship.

a) p 244; b) p 126.

More information at ...

1. [All About Sikhs: Harmandir Sahib - Installation of the Holy Granth](#)
2. [SGPC: Guru Granth Sahib](#)
3. [Sikhism Guide: Sri Guru Granth Sahib](#)
4. [Sikh Scriptures, Images, Excerpts and Quotations](#)
5. [Gurbani Files: Sri Guru Granth Sahib - A Brief Introduction](#)

Sunday, 2 September, 2018

JANMASHTAMI / KRISHNA JAYANTI *Hindu*

The birthday of Krishna is widely celebrated throughout the Hindu world. He is the very popular eighth avatar/incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and many Hindus fast in his honour for 24 hours until midnight, the time of Krishna's birth. For them, Vishnu and Krishna are essentially one and the same. Those unable to fast will take a little fruit and milk. Krishna is welcomed in temples with singing, dancing and the distribution of sweets. At many homes and temples an image in blue of the new-born Krishna is put in a cradle and again special sweets (e.g. *panjiri*, the powder given traditionally to women after childbirth) are offered and distributed.

The celebration mainly consists of spending the whole night in the worship of Krishna, reciting hymns of praise and stories of his pastimes, repeating prayers from the *Bhagavata Purana*, offering respect to Krishna, and finally the ceremonial breaking of the fast. Temples are decorated for the occasion, *kirtans* are sung, bells are rung, the conch is blown, and Sanskrit hymns are recited in praise of Lord Krishna. At Mathura, the birthplace of Krishna, special spiritual gatherings are organised, and pilgrims from all over India attend these festive gatherings. The next day is celebrated as Krishna Jayanti, Krishna's birthday.

Krishna is thought to be ideal in all his human relationships - a darling son to his parents, an endearing and humble friend and comrade, playing the flute and mingling easily with cowherd boys and girls, a loving husband and a trusted brother.

At Krishna Jayanti, Hindu women in South India decorate their houses beautifully, ready to welcome their Lord. From the doorway to the inner meditation room of the house the door is marked with a child's footprints, using rice-flour mixed with water. This creates the feeling in them that their God's own feet have made these marks. For him they prepare various sweetmeats and offer them to him. These normally include butter, since as a child, Krishna was said to be fond of homemade delicacies and was known to steal fresh butter from neighbourhood homes and distribute it among his friends with great compassion.

The *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna reflects on the nature of Truth and Duty, has formed the basis and inspiration for much of Hindu belief, describing the various paths to God in a profound and yet concise manner. The setting of the Gita in Kurukshetra represents the eternal battlefield in the human soul. Here Krishna himself often affirms his role in life while he explains to Arjuna the intricacies of the highest spiritual philosophy, explaining the meaning and purpose of life. He shows how he was engaged incessantly in 'worldly' actions - but only for the welfare and sustenance of other people and the society in which he lived.

Krishna had indeed uttered falsehoods many times, had broken his pledges, had several wives and even 'married' 16,000 women, but still none of these actions violated the truth of his dedication, claiming that he did all these actions in a spirit of supreme detachment, motivated only with the highest goal of safeguarding Dharma.

a) pp 129-130; b) pp 71, 75.

More information at ...

1. [Mangalore: Sri Krishna Jayanti](#)
2. [Festivals of India: Sri Krishna Jayanti/Krishnaastami](#)
3. [Mythic Maps: Janmashtami](#)
4. [Janmashtami in Pictures](#)
5. [AstroVed: Fill Your Life with Love and Abundance - Krishna's Birthday](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 4 September, 2018

FRAVARDIN MAH PARAB *Zoroastrian (Shenshai - Parsi)*

On the day of Fravardin, the 19th day of the month of Fravardin, the first month of the year, Zoroastrians visit the vicinity of the Towers of Silence in India (or in the UK the Zoroastrian Cemetery in Brookwood, Surrey) to participate in a jashan ceremony in memory of the departed fravashis (guardian spirits and souls of the community). Sacred food is prepared as an offering to the departed during the jashan and is later shared by the participants.

More information at ...

1. [Sympatico: Fravashi](#)
2. [Fravardin - a month of good fortune dedicated to the holy spirit](#)
3. [Farvardegan day on Farvardin Roj, Farvardin Mah](#)
4. [Images for Fravardin Mah Parab](#)
5. [Farvardegan](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 6 September, 2018 – Thursday, 13 September, 2018

PARYUSHAN Jain

These are eight days of purification, devoted to study, prayer, meditation and fasting, and ending with a period of confession and forgiveness. Often monks will be invited to give teachings from the Jain scriptures. Paryushana means 'to stay in one place', which signifies a time of reflection and repentance. Originally the practice was monastic for the most part.

a) pp 142, 146-147, 149; b) pp77, 78-79, 80.

More information at ...

1. [Jain World: Paryushan Parva](#)
2. [Colostate Education: Paryushana Parva](#)
3. [What is Paryushana in Jainism?](#)
4. [Images for Paryushan Parva](#)
5. [Jaina: Federation of Jain Associations in North America: Paryushan Parv](#)

Monday, 10 September, 2018 – Tuesday, 11 September, 2018

ROSH HASHANAH (Head of the Year) Jewish

(New Year's Day, 5779 years from the creation of the world). Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of ten days of repentance and self examination, during which God sits in personal judgment on every individual. The blowing of the ram's horn (*shofar*) in the synagogue is a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son, Isaac. Apples dipped in honey are eaten in the hope of a 'sweet' new year. The greeting is '*Leshanah Tovah Tikatev*' (may you be inscribed for a good year).

The sequence of repentance that Rosh Hashanah starts accentuates the Jewish conviction that God forgives the sincere penitent - that He is a merciful judge. While that does not relieve each person of the responsibility to accept the consequences - including punishment - for their actions, it means that Jews do not see people as essentially 'sinners', merely 'people who inevitably sin and must repent'. The mood is solemn in synagogue, but it is not sad at all. Everyone present knows that this happens every year, but that does not relieve them of the need to try again. At the same time, the haunting notes of the shofar make the festival somehow timeless and simple. Unlike many other Jewish festivals, there are very few practices or customs associated with the day, though it is very widely observed and families frequently travel long distances to gather for the festive meals.

Genesis 22, Leviticus 23:24-25.

a) pp 193-196; b) pp 90, 99-102, 109, 141.

More information at ...

1. [Jewfaq: Rosh Hashanah](#)
2. [Jewish Virtual Library: Rosh HaShana - History and Overview](#)
3. [Rosh Hashanah for Tiny Tots](#)
4. [Rosh Hashanah - Images and Pictures](#)
5. [About Judaism: Rosh Hashanah](#)

Tuesday, 11 September, 2018

ETHIOPIAN NEW YEAR'S DAY *Rastafarian*

Ethiopian families love to celebrate their New Year, which they call Enqutatash, 'gift of jewels', with presents and visits. They celebrate a four year cycle, in which each year is named after an evangelist. It is claimed that the Queen of Sheba was in fact an Ethiopian, and that when she returned from her visit to King Solomon, her chiefs welcomed her back by replenishing her treasury with *enku*, 'jewels'.

Rastafarians throughout the world honour it too. It is a spring festival that has been celebrated since early times, and the cessation of the rains marks a month of transition from the old year to the new. Early in the morning everybody goes to Church wearing traditional Ethiopian clothing. Afterwards there is a family meal of *injera* (flat bread) and *wat* (stew). Children dance through the villages dressed in their new clothes at this time, and in the evening households light bonfires as the focus for much singing and dancing. Girls go from house to house handing out bouquets and singing songs, and boys sell pictures that they have painted so that they will have sufficient money to buy presents for members of their families.

More information at ...

1. [The New Year is a happy time in Ethiopia](#)
2. [Ethiopian Calendar: Ethiopian New Year](#)
3. [Rastafarians celebrate Ethiopian New Year's Day](#)
4. [Jamaican Rasta wishes you a Happy New Year](#)
5. [Rastafarian holy days now honoured in UK prisons](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 12 September, 2018

ISLAMIC NEW YEAR 1440 / AL-HIJRA / RA'S UL 'AM (Muharram 1) Muslim

Al Hijra marks the celebration of the Islamic New Year's Day. It is a low-key event in the Muslim world, celebrated less than the two major celebrations, Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha. The day commemorates the *Hijra* or migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Medina in 622 CE, which led to the establishment of the Muslim community there. It is not universally celebrated amongst Sunni Muslims but is notable since Muslim years are dated from this time and are marked AH (*Anno Hegirae* – the year of the *Hijrah*) or *After the Hijrah*. In 2018 CE the Muslim year 1440 AH begins.

In the year 622 the Prophet Muhammad and a number of his followers moved from Makkah/Mecca to the city of Medina and set up the first Islamic state there. Their arrival marked the beginning of Islam as a community in which spiritual and earthly life were completely integrated. They were a group inspired by and totally obedient to God, bound together by religious faith. By breaking the link with his own tribe the Prophet demonstrated that tribal and family loyalties were insignificant compared to the bonds of Islam.

For some Muslim communities this is a day of celebration at the mosque, where stories are told of the Prophet and his Companions. There are no special religious rituals required at this time but a special prayer service is normally held in the mosque and afterwards people wish one another a happy New Year. On this day Muslims think about the meaning of the Hijra and regard this as a good time for new year resolutions, relating to their following of the example of the Prophet.

For the Shi'a community the more important significance of the New year is that this is the first day of a period of fasting, mourning and remembrance, leading up to the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions on the Day of Ashura.

Muslims who migrated to Medina in support of the Prophet were called *muhajirun* (emigrants). Many of them became known as the 'Companions of the Prophet'. Muhammad praised them highly for having forsaken their native city to follow him and promised that God would favour them. They remained a separate and greatly esteemed group in the Muslim community, honoured both in Makkah and in Medina, and assumed leadership of the Muslim state, through the caliphate, after Muhammad's death.

As a result of the Hijrah, Muhammad paired many of the *muhajirun* with members of another distinct body of Muslims who had come into being, the *ansar* (helpers); they were people of Medinah who welcomed and aided Muhammad and the *muhajirun*. The *ansar* were members of the two major feuding tribes of Medinah whom Muhammad had been invited to Medinah to reconcile while he was still a rising figure in Makkah. In time they came to be some of his most devoted supporters.

The significance of *Al Hijra* for Sunni Muslims relates to their committing themselves to a spiritual form of migration – journeying out of a way of life mired in the worldly affairs of this existence – and disciplining themselves to ensure their fitness for their journey to the next life (*akhirah*). To achieve this result they seek to emulate the mindset the Companions of the Prophet possessed when they performed their original migration (the *hijra* from Makkah to Medina), a journey undertaken in obedience to Allah's wishes.

a) pp 213-215, 227-228; b) pp 112, 118.

More information at ...

1. [Islam for the World: Al Hijrah or the Prophet's Emigration](#)
2. [The Hijrah in Islam](#)
3. [BBC Religions: Al-Hijra - The Muslim New Year](#)
4. [Al Hijra Celebrations](#)
5. [Hijrah in Islam](#)

Thursday, 13 September, 2018

GANESHA CHATURTHI *Birthday of Ganesh Hindu*

Ganesh Chaturthi (or Vinayaka Chaturthi) is a Hindu festival that honours the birth of the beloved Hindu elephant-headed god, Ganesh, (also known as Ganesha, Ganapati and Vinayaka). He is the son of Shiva and Parvati, and is a popular god of wisdom and prosperity, worshipped for his ability to remove obstacles and bring good fortune. He is accordingly invoked by Hindus at the outset of any auspicious events, rites and rituals such as marriage, journeys, etc. This festival is particularly significant for Hindus from Maharashtra and is celebrated in a major way in Mumbai (Bombay). Celebrations last for one, five or ten days, and conclude with the immersion in water of the image of Ganesh.

There are numerous stories in Hindu mythology associated with the birth and life of this elephant-headed god, whose vehicle is the rat. Legend has it that Parvati created Ganesh out of the sandalwood dough that she used for her bath. She then breathed life into him. Leaving him to stand guard at the door, she went to have her bath in privacy. When her husband, Shiva returned, the child who had never seen him before refused to let him enter. Shiva cut off the head of the child and entered the house. When Parvati, learnt that her son was dead, she was distraught and asked Shiva to bring him back to life. He sent his servants to fetch the head of the first creature they met. They encountered a young elephant, cut off its head, and Shiva fixed it on the body of Ganesha.

Another story tells of the wedding of Ganesh. Shiva and Parvati decided that one of their sons, Kartikeya or Ganesh, whichever was the first to circumambulate the earth three times, would be the first to be married. Kartikeya flew off on his vehicle - a speedy peacock. Ganapati's vehicle, the rat, was no match for it. But Parvati showed Ganesh, as the more devoted of the two, a simpler way to win. She advised him to walk around his parents, and explained that whoever offered puja to his parents and circled round them would receive the same merit as he who went around the earth. So Ganapati won the race and married first, showing that he who respects his parents attains what he most wishes.

Furthermore, as the designated scribe for the Mahabharata, Ganesh is said to have removed one of his tusks and from it carved a quill. He used this to write the epic poem on palm leaves as the sage Ved Vyas recited it to him. The writing of the epic is said to have taken three years!

On the first day of Ganesh Chaturthi, ardent followers of the god meditate early in the morning on the stories connected with Ganesha. After taking a bath, they go to the temple and offer prayers to him, along with coconut and sweet pudding. They pray with faith and devotion that he will remove all the obstacles they experience on their spiritual path. They also worship him later on at home.

Life-like clay models of Ganesha are made some two to three months prior to the day of the festival. The size of these images may vary from threequarters of an inch to over 25 feet. The artists who create the images of Ganesh often compete with each other to make bigger and more magnificent and elegant ones. These larger versions can be anything from 10 metres to 30 metres in height. Once an image of Ganesh is created, a special ceremony is undertaken to invoke the god's holy presence into the image. Offerings of sweets, flowers, rice, coconut and coins are made to the deity, and the image is also anointed with red *chandan* powder. Prayers are offered to Ganesha every day during the festival, and temples devoted to him organise special events and prayers. Those who have an image of Ganesha in their house also treat and care for him as a well beloved guest.

For 10 days, Ganesha is worshipped. On the 11th and last day of the festival, his image is taken through the streets in a procession, accompanied by dancing and singing, to be immersed in a lake, river or the sea. This symbolises his journey towards his abode in Kailash, where he takes with him each year the misfortunes of all humanity.

a) pp 128-129; b) pp 70-71, 75.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: Ganesh Chaturthi](#)
2. [Taj Online: Ganesh Chaturthi](#)
3. [Go India: Guide to the Ganesh Chaturthi Festival in India](#)
4. [Swaminarayan: Ganesh Chaturthi](#)
5. [Ashtavinayaka: Ganesh Chaturthi](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 13 September, 2018

SAMVATSARI (*International Forgiveness Day*) Jain

This is the last day of Paryushana, which many regard as the most important eight or ten day festival of Jainism. It is the holiest day of the Jain calendar and many Jains observe a complete fast. The whole day is spent in prayers and contemplation, asking for forgiveness from others.

1. [Samvatsari - When Jains purify themselves](#)
2. [Samvatsari, the climax of the festival of Paryushana Parva](#)
3. [Why do Jains say 'michchhami-dukkadam' and when do they say it?](#)
4. [Samvatsari Greetings Cards](#)
5. [Samvatsari - The Festival of Forgiveness](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 19 September, 2018

YOM KIPPUR (Day of Atonement) Jewish

(The 10th day of Tishrei, the 7th Month of the Jewish Calendar)

This is the final day of the ten days of repentance, following on from Rosh Hashanah, and is the holiest day of the year in the Jewish calendar. The Torah calls it the 'Sabbath of Sabbaths', and it is marked by 'afflicting the soul' – chiefly expressed through a total fast that lasts for 25 hours. Jews spend the eve and most of the day in prayer in the synagogue, asking for divine forgiveness for past wrongs and resolving to improve in the future in their attempt to live a moral life. In the days before the festival they will have tried to set right any breakdown in their relationships with others. Now they ask the Almighty for forgiveness before the gates of heaven are closed and the record books are sealed, so that they may live throughout the coming year as He would wish.

Many Jews who observe no other religious customs refrain from work on this day, observe the fast and attend the lengthy synagogue services. On this uncomfortable day washing, bathing, anointing the body, sexual activity and wearing leather shoes or coats are all prohibited to those over 12 or 13 years of age, though dispensations are available for people in poor health or in childbirth. White clothing is worn to express purity, and some wear a white *kittel* reminiscent of the shroud that is used to bury the dead, but more importantly also reminiscent of the extremely simple costume of the High Priest when the Temple still stood in Jerusalem.. This is the only festival of the year when men wear their prayer shawls for evening worship.

The services are lengthy, and involve prostration and standing erect for up to an hour at a time. The Kol Nidre (All Vows) service on the eve of the festival encourages repentance for all types of sins, including for instance mistreatment or exploitation of others, arrogance, selfishness and gossip – the 'evil tongue' in its many forms. The closing service (Neilah) at the end of the period of fasting lasts for an hour, during which the doors of the Ark are kept open and accordingly all must stand. The Book of Jonah is read and a common greeting '*G'mar Chatimah Tovah*' (*May you finally be sealed for good*) is offered by all to each other. A long blast on the *shofar* concludes the main proceedings, followed as on Shabbat by the Havdalah (separation) ceremony, and finally a shared meal.

This is a time for making gifts to the poor (often via charities) in accordance with the instructions of the Torah and the Talmud, albeit nowadays in a spirit of generosity rather than as expiation for guilt – although for some the concept of the scapegoat or the sacrificial chicken that carry away our guilt may still survive.

Leviticus 16:4-34, 23:27-32.

a) pp 196-199; b) pp 12, 90-91, 97-99, 102-103, 109, 141.

More information at ...

1. [Jewish Virtual Library: Yom Kippur](#)
2. [USA Today: On Yom Kippur, Jews split on which shoes to choose](#)
3. [Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement](#)
4. [Greetings Cards for Yom Kippur](#)
5. [Jewfaq: Yom Kippur](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 20 September, 2018 – Wednesday, 26 September, 2018

HIGAN Japanese

Sunday, 23 September, 2018

SHUUBUN NO HI Japanese

Higan marks the autumn equinox. As at the spring equinox, harmony and balance are the themes; sutras are recited and the graves of relatives are visited. (see below for more detail.

a) p 164; b) p 87.

More information at ...

1. [Kabuki Academy - Shuubun no Hi](#)
2. [Kalamalama - Shubun no hi](#)
3. [Tokyo 5: Shubun no hi](#)
4. [Shubun no hi - cleaning the ancestral tombs](#)
5. [In Culture Parent: Happy O-Higan!](#)

Friday, 21 September, 2018

ASHURA (10th Muharram) Muslim

For Sunni Muslims this is one of the two days of a minor fast that the Prophet kept in his lifetime. The second day of the fast may be observed either on the day preceding or the day following the 10th of Muharram. For Shi'a Muslims this is a day when they recall a great tragedy that took place on Muharram 10, AH 61 (680 CE). The Imam Husayn (son of Ali and Fatimah and therefore grandson of the Prophet) travelling with his family and many followers, was attacked by the troops of the Caliph Yazid.

After eight days without water Husayn was killed and his family and followers massacred at Karbala (now in Iraq). Shi'a Muslims remember the events in the days leading up to Ashura when they fast and recall these terrible events. The importance of this holy day can be judged from a popular Shi'a saying which some attribute to a Muslim poet and some to the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Saadiq: "Live as if every day is Ashura, every land Karbala!"

a) pp 228-230; b) pp 118-119

More information at ...

1. [About Islam: The Day of 'Ashura](#)
2. [World Time: Shi'ite Muslims Around the World Mark Ashura](#)
3. [Ashura of Muharram - a Shia and Sunni Muslim Observance](#)
4. [Huffington Post: Ashura - Dates, Rituals and History Explained with Photos](#)
5. [Religion Facts: What is Ashura?](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 23 September, 2018

AUTUMN EQUINOX (Alban Elued or Alban Elfed) Druid

Day and night stand hand in hand as equals. As the shadows lengthen, Pagans see the darker faces of the God and Goddess. For many Pagans, this rite honours old age and the approach of Winter.

More information at ...

1. [The White Goddess: The Wheel of the Year - Mabon, the Autumn Equinox](#)
2. [Mabon Rites and Rituals](#)
3. [The Celtic Connection: Mabon - by Akasha](#)
4. [Simple Wiccan Mabon Ritual](#)
5. [The Llewellyn Encyclopedia: Mabon Ritual](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 23 September, 2018

SHUUBUN NO HI Japanese

This celebration marks the autumn equinox for Japanese people. As at the spring equinox, harmony and balance are the themes; sutras are recited and the graves of relatives are visited. September 23 is the equinox, the 24-hour period when day and night are the same length, the beginning of Autumn. On this day the sun shines at the equator for 12 hours. On the next day, days begin to become shorter than nights in the Northern Hemisphere.

In the past, the autumnal equinox in Japan was called *shuki-koureisai* (the autumn festival of the Emperor's spirits). On this day, the emperor worshipped his ancestors by himself. Nowadays it is called Shuubun-no-hi and is a national holiday. It is the middle day of *higan*, a seven day period when the people of Japan commemorate their ancestors. Memorial services often take place at Buddhist temples, and many people visit their family's graves with offerings of rice cakes, flowers, incense sticks, and offer prayers to comfort the spirits of their ancestors. Although Buddhism is common in India and China, these countries have no similar custom.

Higan has Buddhist origins. It literally means the "other side of the river of death". The two sides of the river represent the worlds of life and death. During these days, Japanese families honour and pray for the repose of their deceased ancestors. This is different from Obon where the spirits of the dead are said to visit the houses of their relatives. At this time of year, living relatives are the ones who visit graves. They clean the tombs and offer prayers and flowers. They also burn incense sticks and offer sweet rice balls called *Ohagi*.

Higan, for Buddhists, is a good time to focus on the 6 Perfections: *Dana* (generosity), *Sila* (virtue), *Ksanti* (patience), *Virya* (effort), *Dhyana* (meditation, also 'zen'), and *Prajna* (wisdom). Just as the worlds of death and life are separated by a river, so the Buddhists believe the 6 Perfections will be the bridge to cross from this life to *Nirvana*.

a) p 164; b) p 87.

More information at ...

1. [Kabuki Academy - Shuubun no Hi](#)
2. [Kalamalama - Shubun no hi](#)
3. [Tokyo 5: Shubun no hi](#)
4. [Shubun no hi - cleaning the ancestral tombs](#)
5. [The Solemnity of Japanese Autumnal Equinox Day](#)

Monday, 24 September, 2018

RABBIT IN THE MOON FESTIVAL/ZHONGQIUJIE/CHUNG CH'IU Chinese

This Mid-Autumn festival celebrates the moon's birthday. Traditionally, offerings of moon cakes are made by women to the goddess of the moon. Offerings are also made to the rabbit in the moon, who is pounding the elixir of life with a pestle. 'Spirit money' is bought along with incense and offered to the moon by women. They also make special 'moon' cakes containing ground lotus and sesame seeds or dates. These contain an image of the crescent moon or of the rabbit in the moon, and children holding brightly coloured lanterns are allowed to stay up late to watch the moon rise from some nearby high place.

a) p 72; b) pp 43-44.

More information at ...

1. [Mystery Authors: Rabbit in the Moon Festival](#)
2. [SACU: Mid Autumn Festival](#)
3. [Wiki How: Enjoy a Chinese Moon Festival](#)
4. [Mid Autumn Festival Legends and Stories](#)
5. [Chinese Child Book: Chinese Moon Festival Background](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 24 September, 2018 – Monday, 1 October, 2018

SUKKOT Jewish

This is an eight day long harvest festival which commemorates the 40 years the Jews spent in the wilderness on the way from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. A temporary hut or a frail booth – called a *sukkah* – is built outside the house each year at this time for eating meals and for visits and socialising. In hot countries families may live in their *sukkah* during the festival. The roof has to be open in part to the elements, so that the stars may be visible through the gaps, and is covered with branches and leaves and decorated with fruit.

Spending time in the family's temporary *sukkah* recalls their newfound liberty in days gone by, an element that underlies many of the festivals Jews celebrate, constantly reiterating and revisiting the central narrative of the Jewish story, the Exodus from Egypt and the journey to the Promised Land. It also recalls the fragility of life – both during the Exodus and in the present day – and the fact that all creation is dependent on the goodness of the Almighty for its life and comfort. Extending hospitality to others, and especially to the needy, is a particular *Sukkot* custom.

Many synagogues build *sukkot* that are used for communal meals and celebration, since many homes have no room for a personal *sukkah*. In Israel, blocks of flats are frequently built with their balconies not directly above one another so that the balcony can be used to build a small *sukkah* which it will be properly open to the sky as required. On *each day of the festival* special sections of the Torah and the Prophets are read, including the instruction to dwell in booths. The book of Ecclesiastes is also read.

Four species of plant, the *lulav* (palm branch), the *etrog* (a yellow citrus fruit), three branches of the *hadass* (myrtle) and two of the *aravah* (willow) are used each day of the festival, the *etrog* in the left hand and the other branches, bound together, in the right. They are waved side by side in all four directions of the compass and up and down to demonstrate the universality of the Almighty, while reciting appropriate blessings. This follows the teaching of the Torah in Leviticus (23:40) 'On the first day, you will take for yourselves a fruit of a beautiful tree, palm branches, twigs of a braided tree and brook willows, and you will rejoice before the L-rd your G-d for seven days.' Above all else, this is a festival of rejoicing at the bounty enjoyed at harvest time as a gift from G-d by the people of Israel.

Leviticus 23:33-43.

a) pp 187-190; b) pp 90-91, 97-99, 109, vi.

NB The first two days (Sept 24, 25) and the last two days (Oct 1, 2) are full festival days when, for Orthodox Jews, work is not permitted.

More information at ...

1. [Jewish Virtual Library - Sukkot](#)
2. [Reform Judaism: Sukkot - Feast of Booths](#)
3. [A Succot Story for Children](#)
4. [Sukkot in Pictures and Photos](#)
5. [Jewfaq: Sukkot](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 29 September, 2018

MICHAELMAS *National*

One of the four Quarter Days in the UK legal calendar.

More information at ...

1. [Culture UK - Michaelmas](#)
2. [Catholic Culture: Michaelmas Day](#)
3. [About Paganism: Michaelmas](#)
4. [Are we ready to embrace the Michaelmas Goose once again?](#)
5. [Waldorf Homes Schools: Michaelmas Circle, Story and Resources](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

October 2018

Here is the tenth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

October 2018

JODY WILLIAMS

1950 -

Jody Williams was born in October in Vermont, USA, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1992 for her work on the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Her childhood family experience made her aware of the demands of living with physical and mental disabilities. This belief in personal caring she extrapolated into a dedicated professional lifestyle of relentlessly working with others against the production, sale and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines.

Timeline

<http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/jody-williams-7073.php>

Nobel compilation

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1997/williams-facts.html

(nb: individual interview video-clip regarding childhood experience on 'doing the right thing when no-one is looking')

<http://www.peacejam.org/nobels/Jody-Williams> campaigning for peace – an overview.

Video links

<http://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/index.php?id=2325> individual interview video-clip regarding childhood experience on 'doing the right thing when no-one is looking'

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p017cq6l> BBC outlook interview (15 mins)

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?310955-1/qa-jody-williams> lengthy video of interview regarding her autobiography, including description of teenage tussle with Roman Catholic teachings and more recent exchanges with Desmond Tutu and Dalai Lama.

http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/women/jody_transcript.htm informative interview for teachers in which she explains her methods as an activist and in campaigning against land mines.

http://www.ted.com/talks/jody_williams_a_realistic_vision_for_world_peace (10 min talk on world peace)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

*** Sunday, Sept/Oct, 2018**

HARVEST FESTIVAL *Christian (Western, Anglican and Free Churches)*

Special services are held around this time of year to give thanks for the goodness of God's gifts in providing a harvest of crops along with all the other fruits of society. Displays of produce are often made, usually distributed afterwards to those in need. Increasingly the emphasis is on a wider interpretation than just the harvests of the fields and seas.

a) p 82; b) p 54.

More information at ...

1. [Barnabas: God is a faithful gardener](#)
2. [Ten amazing harvest festivals from around the world](#)
3. [Activity Village - Suggestions for the Harvest Festival](#)
4. [Images of Harvest Festival Celebrations](#)
5. [Send a Cow: Harvest Festival](#)

Monday, 1 October, 2018

JASHN-E MEHERGAN (or MIHR JASHAN) Zoroastrian (Iranian)

Jashn-e Mehergan is an Autumn festival, and like NoRuz its origins have been lost in antiquity. Mehergan is dedicated to the divinity Meher or Mithra, who is associated with the sun and with justice. The ripening of the crops and fruits at this time of the year is seen as symbolic of the ripening of the world into fullness, before the moment of the ultimate victory over evil. It evokes the physical resurrection of the body along with its immortal soul, as promised by the Lord, Ahura Mazda.

It is customary at this time to visit the Fire Temple to offer thanks to the Creator God, to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, to listen to stories of King Faridoon's triumphant capture of the evil Zohak, and to share in a special community meal. For this celebration, the participants wear new clothes and prepare a decorative, colourful table. The sides of the tablecloth are festooned with dry wild marjoram. On the table are placed a copy of the Khordeh Avesta (the 'little Avesta'), a mirror and a *sormeh-dan* (a traditional eyeliner or *kohl*), together with rosewater, sweets, flowers, vegetables and fruits, (pomegranates and apples), and nuts such as almonds or pistachios. A few silver coins and lotus seeds are set in a dish of water, scented with extract of marjoram.

A burner is also part of the table setting, ready for frankincense and seeds of Syrian rue to be thrown on the flames. At lunch time, when the ceremony begins, everyone in the family stands in front of the mirror to pray. Sherbet is drunk and then - as a good omen - *kohl* is applied around the eyes. Handfuls of wild marjoram, lotus and sugar plum seeds are thrown over one another's heads while they embrace each other. The meal concludes with an appropriate drink, dancing and merrymaking.

Mehregan is an Iranian festival and is celebrated in honour of Mithra, the angel of covenants, and hence of interpersonal relationships such as friendship, affection and love. He is the greatest of the *Yazats* (angels), and is an angel of light, associated with the sun (but distinct from it), and with legal contracts. Mithra is also a common noun in the Avesta meaning 'contract'. He is said to have a thousand ears and ten-thousand eyes.

Mithra figures prominently in the writings of other religions too. He is mentioned in the Rig Veda over 200 times, where the Sun is said to be the eye of Mithra. In the angelology of Jewish mysticism, as the result of Zoroastrian influence, Mithra appears as Metatron, the highest of the angels. He appeared as Mithras, god of the Mithraic religion popular among the Roman military. He is also mentioned in Manichaeism and in Buddhist texts. Mehregan, Tiragan, and Norooz, were the only Zoroastrian feasts to be mentioned in the Talmud, which is an indication of their popularity - and his.

a) pp 254-255; b) p 131.

More information at ...

1. [Iran Review - Jashn-e-Mehregan](#)
2. [Fouman: Collective Iranian Culturebase - Mehregan](#)
3. [Cais/SOAS: Celebrations - The Festival of Mehregan](#)
4. [Anobanini: Mehrgan-Mihragan-Jashn-e Mehr](#)
5. [Historical Iran: Iranian Sites and People](#)

Tuesday, 2 October, 2018

GANDHI JAYANTI *Hindu*

Gandhi Jayanti is an Indian national holiday that celebrates the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, who is referred to as the 'Father of the Nation'. He was the driving force behind the foundation of the state of India. His birthday is celebrated with services, prayers and painting and essay contests with topics that glorify peace and non-violence, and the singing of Gandhi's favourite devotional song entitled 'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram' (Ram Dhun for short). The distribution of alcohol is banned on Gandhi Jayanti, as on other national holidays.

More information at ...

1. [Festivals of India: Gandhi Jayanti](#)
2. [Speech of Mahatma Gandhi 16 Novmber 1969](#)
3. [Gandhi - Celebrations and Quotations](#)
4. [Quotations from Mahatma Gandhi](#)
5. [Who was Mahatma Gandhi?](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday 2 October, 2018

SIMCHAT TORAH Jewish

This festival, whose name means 'Rejoicing in the *Torah*', marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading from the *Torah*. As the reading of the Law in the synagogue should be continuous, a second scroll is begun again as soon as the final portion of the *Torah* has been read from the first scroll; so, as the reading from Deuteronomy ends, with the next breath, Genesis begins without a break - the *Torah* is a circle that never ends. All the *Torah* scrolls are paraded around the synagogue, with children dancing and singing, as do many of the adults, giving as many people as possible the honour of carrying a *Torah* scroll. Progressive Jews frequently celebrate this one day earlier, combining it with the eighth day of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret.

The *Torah* scrolls are removed from the ark and given to members of the congregation to hold; then they march around the synagogue and everyone kisses the *Torah* scrolls as they pass. This ceremony is known as *hakafot*, which means "to march around" in Hebrew. Once the *Torah* holders return to the ark everyone forms a circle around them and dances with them.

There are seven *hakafot* in total, so as soon as the first dance is completed the scrolls are handed to other members of the congregation and the ritual begins anew. In some synagogues, it is also popular for children to hand out candy to everyone.

During Simchat Torah services the next morning, many congregations will divide into smaller prayer groups, each of which will use one of the synagogue's *Torah* scrolls. Dividing the service up this way gives every person in attendance the opportunity to bless the *Torah*. In some traditional communities, only the men or pre-bar mitzvah boys accompanied by adults bless the *Torah* (post bar mitzvah aged boys are counted among the men). In other communities, women and girls are also allowed to take part.

Because Simchat Torah is such a happy day, services are not as formal as at other times. Some congregations will drink liquor during the service; others will make a game out of singing so loud that they drown out the cantor's voice. Overall the holiday is a unique and joyful experience.

The association of joy with the reading and study of *Torah* recurs in much of Jewish worship, and celebrations such as Shabbat, Shavuot and Pesach all bear witness to the centrality of *Torah* to Jewish life.

a) pp 191-193; b) pp 99-100, 109, vi.

More information at ...

1. [About Judaism: Simchat Torah](#)
2. [Jewfaq: Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah](#)
3. [Simchat Torah - Activities for Kids](#)
4. [Simchat Torah: Arts and Crafts](#)
5. [Huffington Post: Simchat Torah: Dates, Dances, Customs, Shemini Atzeret Explained](#)

Tuesday, 9 October, 2018 – Wednesday, 17 October, 2018

NAVARATRI Hindu

All around the world Hindu families gather at this time to participate in circle dances associated with the goddess Durga and with Lord Krishna. Navaratri means nine nights, the length of the festival. Hindus from different areas of India, and especially from Gujarat, celebrate it in different ways: in the north the Ram Lila is performed each night, in celebration of Lord Rama's victory over Ravana, the demon king of Sri Lanka; many Punjabis worship the goddess daily during Navaratri, and observe a strictly vegetarian diet; on the eighth day, Durga Ashtami, Punjabi Hindus fast before conducting worship of the Goddess that involves honouring young girls as the embodiment of her power.

The significance of Navratri lies in offering devotion to the mother goddess Amba (Durga), who is worshipped in many forms. These are known as 'shakti' (power), since the tales tell of the goddesses' power in the killing of demons. Parvati, the wife of Shiva is also said to have taken the forms of several different goddesses. In particular, the goddess Durga is worshipped for the first three days of Navratri, followed by the goddess Laxmi for the next three. The last three days are devoted to the goddess Saraswati. The significance of these female deities lies in the variety of methods they portray for deriving solutions to life's problems, and so Durga triumphs over evil, Saraswati removes ignorance, and Lakshmi brings prosperity.

Navratri in India witnesses myriad forms of devotion across the country, but everywhere the common underlying theme is of the struggle between and the victory of good over evil. It is celebrated all over India and also among the Hindu diaspora with great enthusiasm. A common greeting during this festival is *Shubh Navratri* (Happy Navratri). Before the festival, skilled artisans prepare clay models of the goddess in her various forms. At the end of the festival these are transported to rivers or the sea where they are immersed.

Many Hindus take part in special ceremonies, rituals, fasts and festivities. People buy new clothes, prepare delicious sweets and organise gifts for family and friends. During Navratri, many Hindus in Gujarat and elsewhere wear colourful costumes and perform a special type of vigorous dance known as *garba*. Traditionally, *garbas* are performed around an earthen lamp or an image of the mother goddess. It is a devotional dance form that derives from the folklore of Lord Krishna singing and dancing with the *gopis*, using 'dandiya' or slim wooden sticks. Over the years the Navratri festival has seen many changes, with well-choreographed dance performances, high-end acoustics, innovations in music, and people dressed in made-to-order, bright costumes. Performances of the 'Ramlila', in which people enact scenes from the Ramayana are a regular feature.

a) pp 130-133; b) pp 61, 65, 72-73, 75.

More information at ...

1. [India Online - Navaratri](#)
2. [Gujarat India: All about Gujarat - Navratri](#)
3. [Rudraksha: Navratri festival/Navratri puja](#)
4. [Photos celebrate the ending of Navratri](#)
5. [Huffington Post: Navratri Photos - Durga Puja: Worshipping the Divine Mother](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

***Sunday, 14 October, 2018 / Thursday, 18 October, 2018**

DURGA PUJA *Hindu*

Durga Puja is a celebration of the Mother Goddess, and the victory of the revered warrior Goddess Durga over the evil buffalo demon Mahishasura. The festival honours the powerful female force (*shakti*) in the Universe.

In Nepal, Bangladesh and West Bengal and other north eastern areas of India, Durga Puja is the biggest annual festival and lasts for several days. In Kolkota (Calcutta) hundreds of *pandals* (decorated temporary shrines) are put up. The Goddess's slaying of the demon is celebrated, and in Nepal the celebration may involve animal sacrifices. The festival frequently ends with the immersion of figures of Durga in rivers and in the sea.

The name 'Durga' means 'inaccessible', and she is the personification of the active side of the divine 'shakti' energy of [Lord Shiva](#). In fact, she represents the furious powers of all the male gods, and is the ferocious protector of the righteous, and destroyer of the evil. Durga is usually portrayed as riding a lion, and carrying weapons in her many arms.

The celebration of total victory over this personification of evil, together with the role of the female goddess in achieving an annual victory as great as this, are grounds for widespread rejoicing throughout the Indian subcontinent. The immersion of the goddess in water is, however, an act of purification and adoration. It denotes cleansing and rebirth rather than drowning and destruction.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: The History and Origin of Durga Puja](#)
2. [About India: Guide to Durga Puja Festival in India](#)
3. [The Essentials of Durga Puja](#)
4. [Durga Puja in Photographs](#)
5. [Everything you need to know about Durga Puja in Kolkata](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 14 October, 2018 – Sunday, 21 October, 2018

INTER FAITH WEEK OF PRAYER FOR WORLD PEACE National

Although it was a Christian initiative that led to the founding of the Week of Prayer for World Peace in 1974, it soon became an inter-faith activity, and now welcomes everyone, of all faith traditions or none, to take part.

Prayers from the literature of several different world religions are published each year in a special leaflet for use in temples, churches, synagogues and mosques in this week. This custom receives the support of members from many different religious communities. They also organise joint services, where all can come together and in their own words pray for peace in this world. 'The peace of the world must be prayed for by the faiths of the world.'

For those who want to persevere with the idea of praying with people of other faiths, three thoughts have been suggested: 'First, the different prayers that we say are said by our neighbours in the same town and the same street every week. In worshipping together on this day we simply bring under one roof what happens anyway under the same sky. Secondly, we are convinced that there is only one humanity that prays, and only one Divinity that we pray to, whatever different opinions we may have about that one Divinity. Thirdly we recognise that inter faith partnership does not itself imply agreement.'

Furthermore: 'The things we agree on are many, and precious. The things we disagree on are precious too. When we stand with a follower of another faith who is praying, whenever we can agree with the prayer, we give it our interior assent. Where we cannot agree, we withhold our interior assent. It is still good to stand with that person as a friend and as a partner for peace.'

More information at ...

1. [Week of Prayer for World Peace](#)
2. [Banner Cross Methodist Church: What is the Week of Prayer for World Peace?](#)
3. [Barnabas in Schools: Week of Prayer for World Peace](#)
4. [Images for World Peace and Prayer Day](#)
5. [Brahma Kumaris: Building Interfaith Bridges](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 17 October, 2018

PICNIC IN A HIGH PLACE / CLIMB A HIGH MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL / CHONGYANGJIE / CH'UNG YANG Chinese

This Double Ninth festival is the day for hill climbing or 'going up on a high place'. It reminds of an ancient seer who foretold an imminent natural calamity and escaped by going into the hills. The rest of humanity ignored his warnings and perished. Kites are flown, family graves visited, and a 'golden pig' is shared by large families with fruit, wine, tea and rice.

a) pp 72-73; b) p 44.

More information at ...

1. [China Vista - Picnic in a High Place](#)
2. [Travel China Guide - Chong Yang](#)
3. [About Taoism: Double Ninth Festival - Ching Yang Jie](#)
4. [Pictures for Kite Flying Day](#)
5. [English People: Chong Yang Jie: The story of how the plague monster was defeated](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 19 October, 2018

DUSSEHRA / VIJAYA DASHAMI *Hindu*

The festival of Dussehra, usually falls on the last day of the Durga Puja celebrations, which is also the tenth day after the start of Navratri. It is observed throughout India to commemorate the victory of Lord Rama over the ten-headed demon Ravana. He, Ravana, was the king of Lanka who had abducted Rama's wife, Sita, and was subsequently vanquished in battle. Large effigies of him are burnt as the sun goes down. This day is celebrated as the 'Victorious Tenth' (*Vijaya Dashami*) and huge figures of Ravana alongside his son, Meghnada, and his brother, Kumbhakarna, are filled with fireworks and set on fire in public parks. In the UK some temples carry this out, even if on a smaller scale.

On this day, Hindus worship the goddess Durga, who, pleased with Rama's devotion, gave him the secret knowledge of how to kill Ravana. By using this, he was able to defeat Ravana and rescue his abducted wife, Sita. On this last day of the festival, young men and small boys, dressed as Rama, as Lakshman, his brother, as Hanuman, Rama's chief supporter, as Ravana, the demon, proceed through the streets of the community as part of an elaborate float. Rama and Ravana engage in battle; Ravana is defeated. At the end of the day, images of Ravana are placed in lakes and rivers to symbolise his defeat.

Then at sunset Rama fires an arrow into giant sized images of Meghnada and Kumbhakarna, stuffed - as is the effigy of Ravana - with crackers and explosives; finally an arrow is shot into Ravana's effigy also, to the encouraging shouts of '*Ramchandra ki jai*', 'Victory to Rama', and large explosions ripple through the sky.

Dussehra also symbolises the triumph of the warrior goddess Durga over the buffalo demon, Mahishasura. The story relates how *asuras* or demigods had become powerful and tried to defeat the *devas* and capture heaven. The goddess Durga came to the rescue and took up the form of Shakti to kill Mahishasura. Riding on a lion, she fought him for nine days and nights. On the tenth day, she killed him. Thus, in both legends, the festival tells a story of the victory of good over evil.

Dussehra is celebrated with excitement and fervour across the country. People revel in the festivities by wearing new clothes, exchanging gifts, preparing delicacies, watching Ramlila plays and burning huge effigies of Ravana in the evening. However, every state in India has its own story behind the festivity and its own unique way of celebrating it. Dussehra is celebrated not just in India, but in other countries as well including Nepal, Bangladesh and many others. It is a time when Hindus all over the world visit their relatives and friends.

For the nine days of Navaratri, people fast and perform religious rites so as to sanctify themselves and take a step towards purity, piety and prosperity. On the tenth day, they burn everything that is evil in them, hatred, maliciousness, greed, anger and violence (symbolically represented by the burning of effigies of Ravana, Meghnath and Kumbhakarna) and so they emerge as better individuals filled with a sense of gratitude, devotion and reverence.

Though there are several legendary tales behind the festival and its celebration, all culminate by marking the rise of goodness over evil, of positivity over negativity. In burning the effigies people attempt to burn away all their selfishness, and then follow the path of truth and goodness. According to Hindu Scriptures, by worshipping the '*shakti*' on these nine-days, householders attain the threefold powers, (physical, mental and spiritual), which help them live their lives as the gods direct.

The festival of Dussehra is noteworthy for both its moral and its cultural significance. People, irrespective of their creed, culture or religion, gather to vanquish all evil and unpleasant things and imbibe the goodness around them. The essence of the festival lies in its message: with devotion to the goddess it is possible to overcome all obstacles and emerge victorious and successful.

More information at ...

1. [Dussehr Info: Dussehra - Know About the Mega Festival of Happiness](#)
2. [UCLA: Culture/Festivals/Dussehra](#)
3. [I love India - Dussehra](#)
4. [Dussehra in Images](#)
5. [Calendarlabs - Dussehra](#)

Saturday, 20 October, 2018

CONFERRING OF GURUSHIP ON THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB BY GURU GOBIND SINGH 1708 CE *Sikh*

On October 6th, 1708, the day before his death, Guru Gobind Singh (the Sikhs' tenth Guru, 1666 -1708) declared that, instead of having another human Guru, from now on Sikhs would regard the scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, as their Guru.

The composition known as the Adi Granth contains the *bani* (teaching) of six of the Gurus of the Sikh faith, along with some of the writings of certain Muslim *fakirs* and Hindu saints. It was compiled in this form in the year 1604, incorporating at a later stage the addition of a sacred composition dictated by Guru Tegh Bahadur.

The first copy of the Guru Granth Sahib was installed in the Harimandir (the Golden Temple in Amritsar) in 1604. The fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, compiled the book, which was written down by his uncle, Bhai Gurdas, and printed in Punjabi. The second (enlarged) edition was completed in 1705 by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. He added the hymns of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Guru, and a couplet of his own to the volume created a century earlier. Since then, the authorised version has been transcribed and printed a number of times. Its veneration is an article of faith with all Sikhs.

It is the only scripture of its kind which contains the songs, hymns and utterances of a wide variety of saints, sages and bards from differing traditions. Much of the volume carries the compositions of Hindu *bhaktas*, Muslim divines, Sufi poets and other God-intoxicated souls, whose hymns and couplets, while rendered in their own idiom, find a ready correspondence in the songs of the Sikh Gurus. Guru Arjan's purpose was to affirm the fundamental unity of all religions, and the unitary character of all mystic experience.

Then, in October, 1708, in a gurdwara at Nanded, on the banks of the Indian river Godawari, Guru Gobind Singh designated the Adi Granth as his successor, using in his address the words, '*Guru maneyo Granth*' (consider the Granth to be the Guru), affirming the text of the Granth as sacred and terminating the traditional line of human Gurus. Installed now as the 'Guru Granth Sahib', it became the central text of Sikhism, and the eternal Guru of all Sikhs. In this way he conferred Guruship on the Granth Sahib as the living Guru of the Khalsa, declaring in his speech that the *temporal* functions of the Guru would be performed by the Five Beloveds, the *Panj Pyares*, the leaders of the *Khalsa*; and that *spiritual* guidance would be given in future by the Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Gobind Singh prostrated himself as he offered his obeisance to the sacred Granth. He conferred Guruship on the Granth by walking around it five times and bowing his head before it. He declared that after him, the living Guru would be embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib. The Granth is now central to all Sikh worship and is said to incorporate the living spirit of the ten human Gurus. This gurdwara, Abchal Nagar Sahib gurdwara, is also the place where Guru Gobind Singh died the next day on October 7, 1708.

Guru Gobind Singh did not appoint any human successor in the line of human Guruship as had been the previous tradition. He declared the Guru Granth Sahib to be the ultimate source of authority and the eternal Guru of the Sikhs. Today the Sikh religion holds that in each of the succeeding Gurus, the spirit of Guru Nanak, the first Guru was incarnate, and wherever Sikhs assembled, he would be present. Today the sacred Granth is installed in all Sikh holy places of worship and is treated as the presiding presence of the Guru.

A building becomes a gurdwara ('house of the Guru') when the Guru Granth Sahib is kept inside. The Guru is placed on a raised throne-like platform (*takht*) with a decorated canopy above it. Every morning the Guru is taken out from its special rest room and carried on the head to the centre of the gurdwara, where it is placed on the throne. Devotees offer gifts as they bow to the Granth, whenever they enter the Gurdwara.

More information at ...

1. [Sikh Wiki: Guru Maneo Granth \(Consider the Granth to be the Guru\)](#)
2. [Sikh Missionary Society: Sikhism-Takhts-Sri Hazoor Sahib](#)
3. [Sri-Guru Granth Sahib - Holy Book](#)
4. [Images of Conferring of Guruship on the Guru Granth Sahib](#)
5. [Structure of the Guru Granth Sahib](#)
6. [Sikh Net - Siri Guru Granth Sahib](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 24 October, 2018

PAVARANA DAY *Buddhist*

The last day of the Rains Retreat (the Vassa) is known as Pavarana Day or 'Leaving the Vassa'. It is also known as 'Sangha Day'.

Pavarana means 'to invite' and on the following day monks who have completed the Retreat invite their fellows to admonish them for any failings. This is usually a positive occasion for the monastic community when they seek to let go of recent shortcomings and start afresh in their practice of the Way.

The three month long period (vassa) is often used by lay and monastic folk alike to make a variety of determinations: to take up a particular devotional or meditation practice, to challenge or renounce some old habit - like eating sugar or smoking or drinking coffee (or worse). In Asia this may even consist of lay folk taking temporary ordination for all or part of this time. The full moon of Pavarana marks the end of this period and is a time of celebration. For those who have maintained a strict practice it means they can relax a bit, having learnt something about their particular problem and not falling back into old habits.

The day after Pavarana Day is also the first day on which the *Kathina* may be held. For further information see the description given below on Anapanasati Day, the last day on which the *Kathina* may take place.

a) pp 42-43, 49-50, 52; b) p 29, 32, 33.

More information at ...

1. [Pavarana - Marking the end of the Rains Retreat](#)
2. [Buddha Space: Pavarana Day and 'Buddha Space'](#)
3. [Buddhamind - Festivals: Pavarana](#)
4. [Pavarana Day in Pictures](#)
5. [Little Bang Word Press: Pavarana Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 31 October, 2018

SAMHAIN (pronounced Sow-in) *Wiccan Pagan*

SAMHUINN *Druid*

For all pagan communities the wheel of the year is seen to begin at Samhain. This is the Celtic New Year, when the veil between the world of the dead and the world of the living is said to be at its thinnest. Samhain is the festival of death when pagans remember and honour those who have gone before. Fires are lit and 'dead wood' is burned before stepping into the darkness of winter. Pagans celebrate death as part of life. This is not a time of fear, but a time to understand more deeply that life and death are part of a sacred whole.

At Samhain the veil between the spirits and souls of loved ones are said to have more power and the ability to visit us. This is the time of year for remembering and honouring the dead, and many people will leave a plate of food and a glass of wine out for wandering spirits. (This is often called the Feast of Hecate). Samhain is also a time for personal reflection, and for recognizing our faults and flaws and creating a method for rectifying them.

It is generally celebrated on October 31st, but some traditions prefer November 1st. It is one of the two "spirit-nights" of the year, the other being Beltaine. It is a magical interval when the mundane laws of time and space are temporarily suspended, and the thin veil between the worlds is lifted. Communicating with ancestors and departed loved ones is easy at this time, for they journey through this world on their way to the 'Summer Lands'. It is a time to study the Dark Mysteries and to honour the Dark Mother and the Dark Father, symbolized by the aged Crone and her fading Consort.

Originally the 'Feast of the Dead' was celebrated in Celtic countries by leaving food offerings on altars and doorsteps for the 'wandering dead'. Today many pagans still carry out this tradition. Single candles are lit and left in a window to help guide the spirits of ancestors and loved ones home. Extra chairs are set to the table and around the hearth for the unseen guest. Apples are buried along roadsides and paths for spirits who are lost or have no descendants to provide for them. Turnips are hollowed out and carved to look like protective spirits, for this is a night of magic and chaos. The Wee Folk became very active, pulling pranks on unsuspecting humans. Travelling after dark is not advised. People dress in white (like ghosts) and wear disguises made of straw, or sometimes dress as the opposite gender in the hope that they might perhaps be able to fool the Nature spirits.

This is the time when the cattle and other livestock are slaughtered for eating in the ensuing winter months. Any crops still in the field on Samhain are considered taboo, and left as offerings to the spirits. Bonfires are built, (originally called bone-fires, for after feasting, the bones were thrown in the fire as offerings for healthy and plentiful livestock in the New Year) and stones are marked with peoples' names. Then they are thrown into the fire, to be retrieved the next morning. The condition of the retrieved stone foretells that person's fortune in the coming year. Hearth fires are also lit in the home from the village bonfire to ensure unity, and the ashes are spread over the harvested fields.

During the eighth century of the Common Era, the Catholic Church decided to use November 1st as All Saints Day. This was a sensible step since the local pagans were already celebrating the day, so it made sense to use it as a church holiday. All Saints' became the festival to honour any saint who didn't already have a day of his or her own. The mass which was said on All Saints' was called All Hallow Mass - the mass of all those who are hallowed. The night before naturally became known as All Hallows Eve, and eventually morphed from Samhain into what is now called Halloween.

More information at ...

1. [The White Goddess: The Wheel of the Year/Samhain](#)
2. [About Paganism/Wicca: Samhain History](#)
3. [Wicca - The Celtic Connection: Samhain](#)
4. [A Collection of Samhain Poetry](#)
5. [Inventors: The History of Halloween or Samhain](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 31 October, 2018

HALLOWEEN

WINTER NIGHTS *Heathen*

Halloween is a holiday celebrated on the night of October 31. The word Halloween is a shortening of All Hallows Evening, also known as Hallowe'en or All Hallows' Eve. Traditional activities include trick-or-treating, bonfires, costume parties, visiting 'haunted houses', and carving jack-o-lanterns. Irish and Scottish immigrants carried versions of the tradition to North America in the nineteenth century. Other western countries embraced the holiday in the late twentieth century including Ireland, the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom as well as of Australia and New Zealand.

More information at ...

1. [History of Halloween in Scotland](#)
2. [Time and Date: Halloween in the United States](#)
3. [British Council/Learn British Kids: Halloween](#)
4. [Winter Nights Festival: About Vetrnaetr](#)
5. [Wyrddwords/Vispa: Winter Nights](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

November 2018

Here is the eleventh of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

November 2018

MARIE CURIE

1867 – 1934

Marie Curie, originally from Poland where she was born in November, she spent most of her life studying and researching in France. She was a passionate believer in the human capacity for learning and discovery. Extraordinarily, she was awarded two different Nobel Prizes, one for Physics and another for Chemistry. She identified two previously unknown elements of radioactivity: polonium and radium. During WW1 she developed mobile vans taking X-ray equipment to field hospitals. Subsequently, she founded renowned medical research centres in France, Poland and the USA and devoted herself to working to reduce human suffering. Her cumulative exposure to radiation is thought to have led to her death from leukaemia. Fittingly, her ashes are enshrined in the Pantheon in Paris.

Life and work

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/curie_marie.shtml

<http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/who/our-history/marie-curie-the-scientist>

Religious and political beliefs

<http://hollowverse.com/marie-curie>

<https://humanism.org.uk/humanism/the-humanist-tradition/19th-century-freethinkers/marie-and-pierre-curie>

Teaching about

http://www.ducksters.com/biography/women_leaders/marie_curie.php

Videos

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/chemistry/laureates/1911/marie-curie-docu.html

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 1 November, 2018

ALL SAINTS' DAY (All Hallows', originally All Martyrs') *Christian (Western Churches)*
(*The Catholic Church in England and Wales moves this festival to the nearest Sunday if it falls on a Saturday or a Monday.*)

This day provides a chance to offer thanks for the work and witness of all Christian saints, recognising that not all are known or specially celebrated. Many churches stress this day rather than Hallowe'en, which falls the day before, by holding events especially designed for children.

a) pp 99-100; b) pp 48-49, 53-54, 57.

More information at ...

1. [Church Year: The Solemnity of All Saints Day](#)
2. [About Catholicism: All Saints Day](#)
3. [All Saints \(or All Hallows\) Celebration and Games](#)
4. [Images for All Saints Day](#)
5. [Spanish traditions for All Saints' Day](#)

Friday, 2 November, 2018

ALL SOULS' DAY *Christian*

On this day in particular the departed are remembered and prayers on their behalf are offered. From earliest times Christians have prayed for the souls of the dead. In the year 998, All Souls, 'the faithful departed', began to be remembered in the Church calendar on this day.

More information at ...

1. [About Catholicism: All Souls Day](#)
2. [BBC Religions: All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day](#)
3. [All Souls Day](#)
4. [Images for All Souls Day](#)
5. [Fisheaters: All Souls Day](#)

Friday, 2 November, 2018

ANNIVERSARY OF THE CROWNING OF HAILE SELASSIE I *Rastafarian*

One of the holiest days of the Rastafarian year, it celebrates Haile Selassie's accession to the Ethiopian throne. It cements the role Ethiopia plays at the heart of Rastafarian tradition.

Amongst followers of Rastafarianism, a religion which developed in the 1930s in Jamaica under the influence of Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement, Haile Selassie I is regarded as a messiah who will lead the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora to freedom. The date of his coronation is celebrated by believers throughout the world as one of the most sacred days of the Rastafarian calendar.

Haile Selassie's birthname was Tafari Mekonnen. When he was crowned Emperor in 1930, he assumed the name Haile Selassie, "Might of the Trinity", as well as the title "King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah."

He reigned until 1974, when he was deposed in a military coup following famines and economic turmoil in the country. Put under house arrest by the military authorities, he died in 1975, reputedly of natural causes, although many believe he was killed on the order of the military. Rastafarians themselves believe that Selassie is still alive, and that his widely reported death is part of a conspiracy to discredit their religion. In the end, the dissent which toppled his government came from the same group of elite intellectuals to which he had afforded support and education, in opposition to the influence of feudal tradition.

Custodianship of the popular opinion of Haile Selassie has gradually moved towards the Rasta movement, as the movement itself has gained more freedom, not least through the spread of reggae music. This tradition has proved very efficient in disseminating basic knowledge of Selassie into popular conscience, especially in the Caribbean. Just as old Ethiopians swear on Selassie as *Janhoy* (meaning the Elephant, as in the Emperor who is greater than the King of the jungle, the Lion), throughout the English-speaking parts of the region it is common to substitute 'God knows' with 'Selassie knows'. Iconic images of His Imperial Majesty can be found virtually anywhere
More information at ...

1. [The Dread Library: Crowning of Haile Selassie I](#)
2. [The Coronation of Haile Selassie I](#)
3. [BBC: Religions/Rastafari/Beliefs/Haile Selassie](#)
4. [Photos of the Coronation of Haile Selassie I](#)
5. [A Celebration of Women: 84th Anniversary of the Crowning of Haile Selassie](#)

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Wednesday, 7 November, 2018 – Sunday, 11 November, 2018

DIVALI / DIWALI / DEEPAVALI Hindu

Deepawali or Diwali, the Hindu new year's day, is the biggest and the brightest of all Hindu festivals. It is the festival of lights: *deep* means 'light' and '*avali*' a row', so *divali* is 'a row of lights'. It coincides with the darkest night (15th) of the lunar month of Kartik, which usually falls in late October or early November. The festival is marked by four days of celebrations, which literally illuminate the country with their brilliance and dazzle with their joy. Traditionally every house will set out tiny clay pots with wicks and oil all around their home, and in locations where Diwali is a national holiday, public places are also lit up with beautiful candles and lamps. Families exchange gifts at this time and share a special dinner with relatives and friends.

Each of the four days in the festival of Diwali reflects a different tradition. All four view the festival as a celebration of life and of joy, and they all share a powerful sense of the value of goodness and virtue. Various legends point to its origin. Some believe it to be the celebration of the marriage of the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, with Lord Vishnu. Others view it as a celebration of her birthday, since Lakshmi is said to have been born on the new moon day of Kartik; many see it as a day when she fulfils the wishes of her devotees.

Diwali also commemorates the return from exile of Lord Rama (along with his wife, Sita, his loyal brother, Lakshman, and his chief supporter, Hanuman), culminating in the vanquishing of the demon-king Ravana. In joyous celebration of the return of their king, the people of Ayodhya, the capital of Rama, illuminated the kingdom with earthen *diyas* (oil lamps) and bursts of fire crackers.

In Bengal, the festival is dedicated to the worship of Mother Kali, the dark goddess of strength. Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, the symbol of auspiciousness and wisdom, is also worshipped in Hindu homes on this day. In Jainism, Deepawali has added significance as marking the great event of Lord Mahavira's attaining the eternal bliss of *nirvana*.

All of the simple rituals of Diwali have a significance and a story to tell. Homes are illuminated with lights and noisy firecrackers fill the skies as an expression of human respect for the gods, whose help is sought in the quest for the attainment of health, wealth, knowledge, peace, and prosperity.

For Hindu families this is a time to clean their homes from top to bottom, so that when the lamps are lit their houses will be suitable for Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and knowledge, to enter their home and bless them with good fortune for the coming year. It is traditional for families to make offerings to the goddess, chiefly of fruit, rice pudding, flowers and other assorted gifts.

In addition to that, the exchange of presents during Diwali has become a mandatory part of the celebration. Friends, families, colleagues all share Diwali gifts with each other as an expression of affection. A special feast is shared with delicious food that includes different varieties of sweets.

Indians love colours and this is reflected in various ways. Rangoli is one example, a unique form of art work based on beautiful and symbolic designs and patterns. These are colourfully presented all across India, and are usually created on floors or open spaces.

On this day, Hindu merchants in North India open their new account books for the year and pray for success and prosperity during the coming months. Husbands buy new garments for the family. Employers purchase new clothes for their employees, and the wealthy feed the poor.

The tradition of gambling on Diwali is also legendary: it is believed that on this day the goddess Parvati played dice with her husband Lord Shiva. She decreed that whoever gambled on Diwali night would prosper throughout the ensuing year.

In each legend, myth, and story the significance of Deepawali lies in the victory of good over evil. It is a time when everyone forgets and forgives the wrongs done by others during the previous year. When the oil lamps are lit, there is an air of freedom, festivity, and friendliness everywhere.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: Diwali - Festival of Lights - Light Up Your Life!](#)
2. [Diwali - The festival of lights](#)
3. [Primary Homework Help: Diwali](#)
4. [Divali, the Festival of Lights - in Pictures](#)
5. [Divali for Kidz](#)

Wednesday, 7 November, 2018

DIVALI / DEEPAVALI Jain

Divali has a special significance for Jains, as on this day in 527 BCE Mahavira gave his last teachings and at midnight attained ultimate liberation. Today temples and shrines are decorated, often with toys and images of animals, and Jains meditate on the teaching he gave on this day. Many devout followers fast for the two days of Divali, following the example of Mahavira. Lamps are lit and children are given sweets by their parents, though the songs, dances and noise of Hindu celebrations are not common amongst the Jain communities. Jain business people traditionally start their accounting year from the day after Divali.

The examples set by Mahavira and his teachings are central to all Jain belief and practice, so Divali is a time for meditation and penance, and for generously caring for all living beings. The focus of meditation is usually based on his last discourse, which became famous as the *Uttaradhyayan Sutra*, sometimes known as the *Vipak Sutra*, which has become seminal for much of Jain teaching and belief.

More information at ...

1. [Diwali in Jainism](#)
2. [Huffington Post: A Jain Perspective on Diwali](#)
3. <http://www.jainpedia.org/themes/practices/festivals/divali/mediashow/print.html>
4. [Jain Divali in pictures](#)
5. [Jagran Post: Special way of celebrating Diwali by Jains](#)

Wednesday, 7 November, 2018

BANDHI CHHOR DIVAS / DIVALI Sikh

Sikhs celebrate Bandhi Chhor Divas / Divali since Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, was released from Gwalior prison in Madhya Pradesh on this day in 1619 CE. The day is known as Bandhi Chhor Divas (Prisoner Release Day) because 52 imprisoned princes (*Bandhi*) were released (*Chhor*) by him on this day (*Divas*). It is celebrated in October-November by both Sikhs and Hindus.

The Mughal Emperor Jehangir had long had an antagonistic relationship with this new religious community, now rising within his kingdom - so much so that he had ordered and carried out the execution of Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs and Guru Hargobind's predecessor. During the time of the 6th Guru, Sikhism had become the fastest growing religion. Unfortunately, religious leaders and the Emperor became fearful and jealous, so they ordered the Guru to be detained in Gwalior fort in 1612 CE.

Rather than being a sanctuary of tranquility, Gwalior Fort was really a prison where enemies of the state, including a number of Rajput princes were detained. On entering the fort, the Guru was greeted by 52 Indian princes. They had been stripped of their kingdoms by the Emperor and were being ill-treated, with insufficient food and no clear clothes to wear. True to his nature, the Guru inspired them to join him in daily prayers and did his best to improve their conditions. In time, they came to respect and honour him.

Jahangir was alarmed by the Guru's popularity in the fort. In addition to this a group of prominent Sikhs campaigned in Delhi to secure his release. Troubled with fearful visions, and the remembrance that Guru Hargobind had once saved his life, the Emperor gave orders for him to be allowed his freedom. But when his release was offered him by the Emperor Jehangir, the Guru rejected the offer unless the 52 imprisoned Hindu princes were also given their freedom. To meet the Emperor's churlish condition that only those who could hold on to his cloak could leave the prison with him, the Guru had a coat made for himself with long panels to which all 52 could cling. The princes each grasped a panel, 26 on the right and 26 on the left as they left. In this way, the Guru secured the release of all his fellow inmates.

Several days later, when Guru Hargobind reached Amritsar, the Hindu festival of light, Divali, was being celebrated. In their joy at seeing their Guru again, the people lit up the whole city with candles, lights and lamps. After almost four hundred years this tradition continues in Amritsar, and on this day the Harimandir is aglow with thousands of candles and floating lamps, strings of lights decorate the domes, and fireworks burst in the sky. Elsewhere, all around the world, Sikhs commemorate Bandi Chhor Divas, Prisoner Release Day, by lighting hundreds of candles in the evening around the gurdwara, singing shabads composed by Bhai Gurdas in praise of Guru Hargobind, preparing a festive *langar*, and basking in the spirit of joy, freedom and festivity. It is a festival marked by gifts of new clothes, presents and sweets - a true **'Festival of Liberation'**.

a) pp 237-239; b) pp 125-126, vii.

More information at ...

1. [Sikh Net: Bandi Chhor Divas](#)
2. [Sikh Dharma: the story of Bandi Chhor Divas](#)
3. [Sikh Guru: Divali/Bandi Chhor Divas \(Prisoner Release Day\)](#)
4. [Storyboard of Sikh Divali](#)
5. [Sikh Perspective on Divali](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 9 November, 2018

ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF THE BAB Baha'i

The *Bab* (the title means 'the Gate') was born in Shiraz, Persia in 1819. He was the prophet-herald of the Baha'i community and called people to religious renewal and to await the coming of a new messenger from God – 'the one whom God shall make manifest'. Baha'is believe that this latter figure was Baha'u'llah (the title means 'Glory of God'). Baha'is observe this holy day by abstaining from work. Their gatherings normally involve prayers, devotional readings, music and fellowship.

Bahá'ís believe that God causes very special people to be born at different times in history and in different places in order to 'educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man...' (Abdu'l-Bahá, son of Bahá'u'lláh). The Bahá'í Faith refers to such people as 'Manifestations of God' and, for Bahá'ís, Abraham, Krishna,

Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, and Muhammad are all held to be Manifestations of God, as were untold others whose names and stories are now lost. But, for the era in which we are now living, Baha'is believe God sent two Manifestations of himself in the persons of the Báb ('Ali Muhammad Shirāzi - October 20, 1819 – July 9, 1850) and Bahá'u'lláh (Mírzá Husayn-`Alí Núrí - 12 November 1817 – 29 May 1892) both of whom were born in Persia / Iran).

The birthdays of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are now celebrated as the Twin Holy Birthdays on two consecutive days each year and these are two days that Bahá'ís will wish to be absent from work or school. (In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the most holy of the Bahá'í scriptures, Bahá'u'lláh wrote that his birthday and that of Báb "are accounted as one in the sight of God")

a) p 26; b) pp 19-20.

More information at ...

1. [Tacoma Baha'i: The Anniversary of the Birth of the Bab - October 20th](#)
2. [Baha'i Blog: The Life of the Bab](#)
3. [Suggested Devotional Program for the Birth of the Bab](#)
4. [Susan Gammage: The Birth of the Bab - Holy Day Programme](#)
5. [Bella Online - The Voice of Women: Birth of the Bab](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 10 November, 2018

ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Baha'í

Bahá'u'lláh is held by many of his followers to be the founder of the Baha'í faith. He was born the eldest son of a Persian nobleman in Tehran, Persia, in 1817. For Bahá'ís, the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh is a Holy Day celebrating the rebirth of the world through the love of God.

[`Abdu'l-Bahá](#), the son of Bahá'u'lláh, stated that during this holy day the community should rejoice together to increase the unity of the community. Bahá'ís usually observe the holy day with community gatherings where prayers are shared and the birth of Bahá'u'lláh is celebrated. Bahá'u'lláh stated that in communities where the majority of the population are [Shi'a Muslims](#), such as Iran, his followers should exercise caution in celebrating the twin birthdays so that they do not upset the majority of the population who are mourning during the Islamic month of [Muharram](#).

The birthdays of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are now celebrated as the Twin Holy Birthdays on two consecutive days each year and these are two days that Bahá'ís will wish to be absent from work or school. (In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the most holy of the Bahá'í scriptures, Bahá'u'lláh wrote that his birthday and that of the Báb 'are accounted as one in the sight of God')

Bahá'ís believe that God causes special people to be born at different times in history and in different places in order to 'educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man...' (Abdu'l-Bahá, son of Bahá'u'lláh). The Bahá'í Faith refers to such people as 'Manifestations of God', for Bahá'ís, Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, and Muhammad were all Manifestations of God, as were many others whose names and stories are lost. But God has also sent two Manifestations of God in the persons of the Báb ('Ali Muhammad Shirāzi - October 20, 1819 – July 9, 1850) and Bahá'u'lláh (Mírzá Ḥusayn-`Alí Núrí -12 November 1817 – 29 May 1892) both born in Persia (now Iran).

a) pp 26, 166; b) pp 19-21.

More information at ...

1. [123 Holiday: Birth of Baha'u'llah](#)
2. [Wikipedia - Birth of Baha'u'llah](#)
3. [Baha'i Invitation: Birth of Baha'u'llah - The Lord of the Age - Who is Baha'u'llah?](#)
4. [Bahauallah.org: The Life of Baha'u'llah - A photographic narrative](#)
5. [Baha'i Blog: The Birth of Baha'u'llah and the Spirit of the Age](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 11 November, 2018

REMEMBRANCE DAY *National*

The Sunday nearest to Armistice Day, devoted to remembering the dead of the two World wars and subsequent wars.

More information at ...

1. [History Extra: In focus - Remembrance Day Traditions](#)
2. [The Guardian: Remembrance Sunday - call for Church of England to ditch Cenotaph role](#)
3. [The Story behind the Remembrance Poppy](#)
4. [Poppies at the Tower of London](#)
5. [The War Poetry Web: Poems for Remembrance Day and Peace Events](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 11 November, 2018 to Sunday 18th November, 2018

INTER FAITH WEEK

Held in the second week of November, Inter Faith Week aims to strengthen good interfaith relations, increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities, and increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs.

Central to these aims is celebrating and building on the contribution which members of different faith and non-faith communities make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society.

The Week, in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, is led and supported by the Inter Faith Network for the UK but is community-led, with organisations of all types holding their own events. Further information is available on the Inter Faith website, including event information and resources for organisers. 2018 will be the 10th Inter Faith Week in England and Wales.

The Inter Faith Network's member bodies include national faith community representative bodies; national, regional and local interfaith organisations; and educational and academic bodies with a focus on interfaith or multi-faith issues.

Scottish Interfaith Week is led by Interfaith Scotland, and information can be found on its website – see 5. below.

1. [The Inter Faith Network home page](#)
2. [Inter-Faith Week info](#)
3. [Inter Faith Week Toolkit](#)
4. [Inter Faith Week resources for schools](#)
5. [Scottish Interfaith Week](#)

Thursday, 15 November, 2018

SHISHI-GO-SAN (Seven-Five-Three) *Japanese*

Girls of seven, boys of five and girls of three are dressed up in new clothes and taken to a Shinto shrine to pray for their future well-being. As is the case with Hinamatsuri, the family's care for children and their upbringing is a central aspect of Japanese family life.

As part of the festival, girls are dressed in kimonos while boys wear haori jackets and hakama trousers, for the celebration, and visit the shrine with their families to participate in a Shinto purification ceremony to pray for a long and happy life and to mark their passage into middle childhood. The ages three, five and seven are said to have been chosen as odd numbers are considered auspicious in Japanese numerology.

The custom dates back to the Heian period (794-1185) when child and infant mortality was high. It began amongst court nobles and then spread to the samurai class who added several rituals. During the samurai era, it was customary for children to have their heads shaved at birth. It was kept short until the age of three. The Shichi-go-san festival marked the time when children could start growing their hair, referred to as "kamioki" (literally 'putting on hair').

Although this custom is no longer observed, the celebration of the day that marked it is. At the age of three, boys and girls make their first debut at the local shrine wearing traditional Japanese clothes. Then at the age of five, boys celebrate 'hakamagi-no-ig', their first time to officially wear 'hakama' or formal Japanese pants. And at the age of seven, girls celebrate 'obitoki-no-gi' when they wear the traditional 'obi' sash to tie their kimono for the first time instead of simple cords. Children get Chitoseame in a bag with a crane and a turtle on it. In Japan these animals are symbols of long life. Chitoseame is wrapped in an edible rice paper so children do not have to bother with removing the wrapping.

a) p 166; b) p 87.

More information at ...

1. [Notes of Nomads: Shishi-Go-San Festival, Japan](#)
2. [Go Japan Go: Shishi-Go-San](#)
3. [Kids Web Japan: Shishi-Go-San](#)
4. [Zooming Japan: Shishi-Go-San - 7-5-3 Day on November 15th](#)
5. [Traditions and customs: Shishi-Go-San](#)

Wednesday 21 November, 2018

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY / MILAD UN NABI (12th Rabi'ul-Awwal) Muslim (Sunni)

Monday, 26 November, 2018

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY / MILAD UN NABI (17th Rabi'ul-Awwal) Muslim (Shi'a)

Observed by Sunni Muslims on 12th Rabi' Al-Awwal (November 21 in 2018), and by the majority of Shi'a Muslims five days later on 17th Rabi' Al-Awwal (November 26 in 2018) (though Nizari Ismaili (Shi'a) Muslims, who are followers of the Aga Khan, celebrate this on the same date as Sunnis, whereas Dawoodi Bohra Ismailis celebrate at the same time as other Shi'a).

The day is widely celebrated within the Muslim world as in the UK to mark the birth of the Prophet, and is a public holiday in a number of Muslim countries. In the sub-continent of India and certain Arab countries like Egypt, the celebration starts with readings from the Qur'an, followed by discussion of the birth, life and message of the Prophet, and poetry and songs in his praise. There are also lectures and storytelling. The most important part of Eid Milad-un-Nabi is focusing upon the character of the Prophet, his bravery and wisdom, his teachings, sufferings, and how he forgave even his most bitter enemies.

In many cities of the Muslim world the day is marked with processions and flag waving under a huge decoration of lights. Those Muslims who celebrate this festival do so joyfully. Muslim parents tell stories of the Prophet's life to their children. Some Muslims donate to charity. Families gather together, feasts are arranged and food is served to invited guests and to the poor.

There are only restricted festivities on Milad un-Nabi because the same day also marks the anniversary of the death of the Prophet. In the UK Muslims often celebrate at the mosque, but some refuse to observe the Prophet's birthday, claiming that celebrating birthdays or death anniversaries is a non-Islamic innovation, never celebrated by the Prophet, but introduced more than 600 years after his death. Tradition is not clear as to the date of the Prophet's birth.

a) pp 230-231; b) pp 119-120.

More information at ...

1. [Islamic Supreme Council - Mawlid un Nabi](#)
2. [Celebrating Mawlid un Nabi - any proof?](#)
3. [BBC Milad un Nabi](#)
4. [Mawlid al Nabi - through festival cards](#)
5. [Milad un Nabi – Legal and Religious Status](#)

Friday, 23 November, 2018

LOY KRATONG Buddhist

Loy Kratong is celebrated in most of the village and town temples in Thailand and often coincides with the local temple's Kathina Day observance of Anapanasati. The festival takes place on the full moon night of the twelfth lunar month when the water level is high and the climate is cooler. This is usually in November when the full-moon lights up the sky, at the end of the rainy season. The festival indicates a close bond between Thai culture and the creative use of the recent heavy rainfall.

Before the festival, small lotus shaped baskets are made out of bread or the bark of a banana tree or rubber plant leaves, all items that will degrade naturally in the water, and these are elaborately decorated with folded banana leaves or lotus flowers in intricate, towering designs. Into these are placed incense sticks, candles, betel nuts and sometimes a small coin. They are then launched on rivers, canals, ponds or the sea. The sight of thousands of *krathongs* with their flickering candles sending a thousand pinpoints of light far into the horizon is a truly magical sight.

With them goes a wish for good luck, offered to propitiate the spirits of the water. The floating of a *krathong* is intended to wash away ill fortune as well as to express apologies to Khongkha or Ganga, the River Goddess for misuse or pollution of her domain. Captive eels and turtles are frequently released into the water at this time in her honour.

Hundreds of *krathongs* are for sale around the main Loy Krathong festivity areas. Often children will make their own versions at school or with their family. They may share in contests in school to see who can craft the most beautiful and artistic float. If your candle stays alight until your *krathong* disappears out of sight, it is said to mean a year of good luck, and couples can get an insight into the future of their relationships by watching whether their *krathongs* float together or drift apart.

In recent years Thais have become more creative in their craft, and design the *krathongs* from coconut shells, flowers, baked bread, potato slices, some even breaking with the conventional lotus leaf shape in favour of turtles and other sea creatures. On the other hand the base of the *krathong* often tends currently to be made from synthetic materials and, despite efforts to ban environmentally unfriendly floats, rivers and waterways are often covered with unsightly pieces of styrofoam the next morning.

Loy Krathong vies for the title of most important Thai holiday festival with Songkran, which is held in April. The grandest Loy Krathong celebrations are held in the northern city of Chiang Mai. Large floats are drawn through the streets, fashioned as giant *krathongs* each with their own theme. Many of the celebrants on the floats dress in regal Thai costumes or as mythical Thai beings, and beauty queens sometimes wave to the crowds.

The history behind the festival is complex, and Thais celebrate for many reasons. The main rice harvest season has ended and it is time to thank the Water Goddess for a year's worth of her abundant supply. Some believe that this is the time symbolically to 'float away' all the anger and grudges and ill fortune people have been holding inside themselves, and including a fingernail or a lock of hair is seen as a way of letting go of the dark side of oneself, to start a new year free of negative feelings.

More information at ...

1. [History of Loy Kratong](#)
2. [Loy Krathong in Contemporary Thailand](#)
3. [Thailand for Children - Loy Kratong](#)
4. [Loy Kratong and Yee Peng - baskets and lanterns that float away](#)
5. [Celebrating Loy Kratong in Bangkok](#)

Friday, 23 November, 2018

ANAPANASATI DAY Buddhist

Anapanasati day, as observed by monks in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, is marked by two different ceremonies: one falls on the final day of the three months long Rains Retreat; the other falls on the same day or at some time during the month that follows.

The first is the 'Invitation' or '*Pavarana*' ceremony (see above), usually held towards the end of October. On the same day or up to a month later comes the *Kathina* ceremony. *Anapanasati* is the last day on which the *Kathina* ceremony may be observed.

This ceremony, the 'Invitation', takes place at the very end of the Rains Retreat when the monks and nuns meet together and invite one another to point out each other's faults, as they have been observed during the Retreat. A monk (*Bhikkhu*) has to be open to any criticism from colleagues or lay people he (or she) has met regarding his/her behaviour.

Being open to criticism in this manner was a way of life the Buddha himself inaugurated. Since then the monks of the *Sangha* need to be sensitive to complaints made by others in order to win their respect and to encourage them to learn and progress in the *Dhamma* (teaching). In particular they have to take note of the remarks made by their fellow monks. It is a kind of check-and-balance system between individual *Bhikkhus* as well as between the senior and the junior monks.

The 'Invitation' Ceremony is important ceremonially as well as spiritually. Without it there cannot be a proper *Kathina* robe-offering – any gifts of robes will only be the ordinary robe-offerings which often follow the Retreat, with no benefit to the monks themselves.

The second ceremony of Anapanasati falls on or after the final day of the three months long Rains Retreat, after cloth has been presented to the *Sangha* (the community of monks and nuns) by members of the lay Buddhist community. This is made into a *Kathina* robe by sewing patches of the cloth together. The robe is then offered by the monks present to a particular monk, usually an especially deserving or virtuous one, in a thoughtful ceremony conducted by four of his colleagues.

The word '*Kathina*' is Pali in origin. It means a frame used in sewing robes in the period when the Buddha lived and taught in India. The *Kathina* ceremony is necessarily a monastic one, but the cost of producing and dyeing the robe is usually supported by the donations of local devotees. The laity may gain merit by observing the ceremony.

Throughout the four following months the monk who receives the robe enjoys the relaxation of five minor rules (out of the 220 that normally apply during and after the Retreat). These mainly relate to travel and the receipt of alms. Normally a *Bhikkhu*, whether senior or junior, has to inform his fellow monks who live in the same temple before he goes out. Once he has received the *Kathina*-robe he can choose whether to do so or not. He also has less restriction on where he travels. Usually he has to carry all the three pieces of his/her robe wherever he goes, but now he can now leave one behind if he wishes. He can also accept other robes if offered during the period of four months.

At the heart of *Anapanasati*, which means 'mindfulness of breathing', is a form of Buddhist meditation initially taught by Gautama Buddha. It is described in several *suttas* (discourses delivered by the Buddha) including the *Anapanasati Sutta*. It originated when the Buddha announced in advance one year that he would speak at the end of the Rains. This allowed a large number of monks, elders, and teachers to come together. He praised their various practices within the assembly, and then explained the importance to them of 'mindfulness of breathing in and out', and how it can bring 'knowledge and liberation.' Mindfulness, meditation and breath control have since come to be at the heart of Theravada Buddhism.

a) pp 43, 48-50, 52; b) pp 29, 31-33, 37, 141.

More information at ...

1. [Anapanasati Sutta: Mindfulness of Breathing](#)
2. [Kathina Ceremony: Historical and Spiritual Significance](#)
3. [Vipassana Research Institute: Anapana for Children](#)
4. [Anapanasati Breathing Meditation](#)
5. [Anapanasati - Mindfulness with Breathing In and Out](#)

Friday, 23 November, 2018

BIRTHDAY OF GURU NANAK (1469 CE) *Sikh*

Although the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak, was born in April 1469, his birth anniversary (one of Sikhs' most widely celebrated *gurpurbs*) is still generally celebrated on the full moon day of the lunar month of Kartik. As is the case with all other *gurpurbs*, an *akhand path* (a complete, unbroken reading of the Guru Granth Sahib) commences two days earlier so that it ends on the morning of the festival. Sikhs gather at the gurdwara for hymn-singing (*kirtan*) and to hear *kathas* (homilies) and share the *langar* (free meal). The gurdwara may be illuminated and street processions take place too, culminating in some cases, as at Baisakhi, in the washing and redressing of the *nishan*, the flag and the flagpole erected outside each gurdwara.

The name "Nanak" was used by all subsequent Gurus while penning down their own spiritual revelations, recorded now in the holy scripture called the Guru Granth Sahib. So the second Sikh Guru, Guru Angad Dev Ji is also called the "Second Nanak" or "Nanak II". It is believed by the Sikhs that all subsequent Gurus carried the same message as that of Guru Nanak and so they have used the name 'Nanak' in their holy text instead of their own name and hence are all understood to carry the divine 'Light of Nanak'.

Although each of the ten human Gurus shares a common nature and equal honour, Guru Nanak is fêted as the one who initiated the Sikh tradition and determined its direction for the future. His creativity and humanity became landmarks for those who follow his example.

a) pp 240-242, 244; b) pp 122-123, 126.

More information at ...

1. [Guru Nanak](#)
2. [Guru Nanak Jayanti](#)
3. [SPCK - Assemblies Org UK: The birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji - A Sikh celebration](#)
4. [Guru Nanak in Images](#)
5. [Times of India: Guru Nanak Jayanti](#)

Saturday, 24 November, 2018

MARTYRDOM OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR (1675) Sikh

As ordered by the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded in Sis Ganj, near Chandi Chowk in Old Delhi, for upholding the refusal of a number of Hindu Kashmiri Brahmins' to convert to Islam. These Hindus had turned to him for help and the Guru told them to inform the Emperor that they would only convert if the Guru also converted. This of course he then refused to do. Guru Tegh Bahadur is accordingly honoured for sacrificing his head (*sir*) rather than his faith (*sis*) for the religious freedom of those of a different religious persuasion from himself.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the youngest of the five sons of Guru Hargobind, and was born in 1621 CE. His name means 'Mighty of Sword', and his father foresaw that he would become his successor as Guru in due course. He received effective training in archery and horsemanship as well as in the classic teachings of the Sikh traditions. He showed early promise of mastery in all these fields, and also gave evidence of a deeply mystical temperament by his prolonged spells of seclusion and contemplation. This strain of his genius is best expressed in his sublime poetry, preserved in the Guru Granth. There was no doubt that he was his father's favourite and that mighty events awaited him.

Guru Tegh Bahadur held several meetings with the Emperor, Aurangzeb. During the course of the discussions and the arguments that ensued in these conferences, Aurangzeb tried to justify his actions to crush infidels, by arguing that the Hindus were destined to be thrown into hell if they did not worship Allah, the one true God. He claimed he was carrying out this policy on the orders of the Almighty and that the only way for Hindus to gain admission to heaven and to avoid hell was to embrace Islam.

Guru Tegh Bahadur in His reply told the Emperor of Delhi: 'All men are created by God and therefore must be free to worship in any manner they like.' It is worth noting that the Sikhs are as much against idol worship as are the Muslims. Ideologically therefore Guru Tegh Bahadur and Aurangzeb were much nearer to each other, than either were to the Hindus - whose cause the Guru was defending. It is apparent that the Guru was espousing an ideology in which he himself did not believe. This is why his sacrifice was unique.

At the end of these discussions the Emperor gave the Guru three options:

- (i) To embrace Islam as His religion and receive the highest honours in his court.
- (ii) To perform miracles, which the Muslims regarded as the fundamental characteristic of a true prophet;
- (iii) To accept death.

The Guru declined to accept Islam or to perform any miracles. 'God's favour is not for the purpose of show, like a juggler.' Instead he willingly accepted the third offer - that of death. He was placed in prison in Delhi, and when he continued to plead the case for Hindu emancipation, he was placed in an iron cage and tortured. He was forced to witness the torture and death of some of his followers, one (Matidas) being sawn in half, while reciting the Japji, another being thrown into a cauldron of boiling water, and yet another torn apart. The Guru still refused to submit and was beheaded on the Emperor's order. His example of courage and bravery had a profound influence on those who supported and followed him, and led eventually to a new era of freedom and tolerance for all.

a). pp 240-242, 244; b) pp 124, 126.

More information at ...

1. [Sikh Missionary Society: The Supreme Sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur](#)
2. [Sikh History: Guru Tegh Bahadur ji \(1621 - 1675\)](#)
3. [8 Quotations from Guru Tegh Bahadur](#)
4. [Guru Tegh Bahadur Shabads](#)
5. [Patshahi 10: Who killed Guru Tegh Bahadur?](#)

Monday, 26 November, 2018

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY / MILAD UN NABI (17th Rabi'ul-Awwal) Muslim (Shi'a)

Observed by Sunni Muslims on 12th Rabi' Al-Awwal (November 21 in 2018), and by the majority of Shi'a Muslims five days later on 17th Rabi' Al-Awwal (November 26 in 2018) (though Nizari Ismaili (Shi'a) Muslims, who are followers of the Aga Khan, celebrate this on the same date as Sunnis, whereas Dawoodi Bohra Ismailis celebrate at the same time as other Shi'a).

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a) pp 230-231; b) pp 119-120.

More information at ...

1. [Islamic Supreme Council - Mawlid un Nabi](#)
2. [Celebrating Mawlid un Nabi - any proof?](#)
3. [BBC Milad un Nabi](#)
4. [Mawlid al Nabi - through festival cards](#)
5. [Milad un Nabi - Legal and Religious Status](#)

Friday, 30 November, 2018

ST ANDREW'S DAY *National*

Andrew, the apostle, was brother of St Peter, and the first disciple to follow Jesus. He was crucified at Patras in Greece and has been patron saint of Scotland since the 8th century. In the Anglican communion he is associated with missionary activity.

a) *p 100*; b) *pp 57, 59*.

More information at ...

1. [Time and Date: St Andrew's Day in the UK](#)
2. [Catholic Culture: November 30th - Feast of St. Andrew, apostle](#)
3. [Activity Village - St Andrew's Day](#)
4. [British Library: Medieval manuscripts blog - Happy St Andrew's Day](#)
5. [The Scotsman: St Andrew's Day - History, Date and Traditions](#)

December 2018

Here is the twelfth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

December 2018

ALBERT LUTHULI

1908 - 1967

Born in South Africa in December 1908, Albert Luthuli's life combined Zulu tribal loyalties with a Protestant Christian sense of service. These beliefs he initially expressed through working as a teacher, then as a local community leader, and from 1944 as a member and eventually president general of the African National Congress. Through non-violent campaigning he challenged the increasingly oppressive discrimination implicit in the government's Apartheid policy. Because he was so effective in his role and activity, his tribal status was formally abolished and his freedom to travel denied. While denying that he merited the Nobel Prize, the government exceptionally allowed him to travel to Oslo to receive it. He was emphatic in believing that his deep Methodist Christian convictions must challenge the distorted version of Christianity as then held by the Dutch Reform Church. At the award ceremony he not only wore his traditional elected chief's headdress but ended his acceptance speech with the ANC anthem *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*. His own tribal name was Mvumbi – 'Continuous rain'.

Nobel compilation

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1960/lutuli-bio.html

Life overview

<http://africanhistory.about.com/library/biographies/blbio-lutuli.htm>

Timeline

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/albert-john-luthuli-timeline1800-1967>

Speeches

<http://luthulimuseum.org.za/luthuli-museum-speeches>

Videos

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=HOoDHzepIKI> in Zulu and English, including interview with his daughter

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=XPfGerXI-Sw> His political heritage

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jTWM4yE6qNA> Alongside Nelson Mandela

Sunday, 2 December, 2018

ADVENT SUNDAY *Christian (Western Churches)*

Advent means 'Coming'. It heralds the start of the Christian year, and commences on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. It is often celebrated by lighting the first candle in the advent crown – a circular wreath of greenery. A further three candles are lit on subsequent Sundays, culminating with the Christmas candle on the 25th of December. Together these signify the transition from darkness to light, the light of Jesus coming into the world.

The earliest celebration of Advent dates back to the year 567 CE when monks were ordered to fast during December, in preparation for Christmas. Some Christians fast during Advent to help them concentrate on their preparations for celebrating the coming of Jesus. In many Orthodox and Eastern Catholics Churches, Advent lasts for 40 days, starting on November 15th. It is also called the Nativity Fast. Orthodox Christians no meat or dairy foods during Advent, and they may also avoid olive oil, wine and fish.

There are some Christmas Carols that are really Advent Carols. These include 'People Look East', 'Come, thou long expected Jesus', 'Lo! He comes, with clouds descending' and, perhaps the most popular advent song, 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel!'

There are several ways that Advent is counted down but the most common is by a calendar or candles. There are many types of calendars used in different countries. The most common ones in the UK and USA are made of paper or card with 24 or 25 little windows. One of these is opened each day in December and a Christmas picture is displayed underneath.

For Christians Advent is a time of preparation for and reflection on the mystery of the incarnation. It is observed through private prayer and self-discipline and its aim is to ready the believer for celebrating at Christmas the miracle of God's taking human form.

a) pp 82-83; b) pp 48-49, 59, 66, 77, 142.

More information at ...

1. [The Season of Advent - Anticipation and Hope](#)
2. [Living Hope: The meaning of the Advent Wreath](#)
3. [Project Britain - Advent and the Advent Calendar](#)
4. [Eric Huntsman - The Advent theme of joy](#)
5. [Why Christmas: The Tradition of Advent](#)

Monday, 3 December, 2018 – Monday, 10 December, 2018

HANUKAH Jewish

Hanukah is the Jewish Festival of Lights, which celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after it was recaptured from the Syrian Greeks by the Maccabee brothers in about 162 BCE. For the eight evenings of the festival, candles are lit from right to left in a *hanukkiyah*, a nine-branched *menorah* – one candle for each evening. The ninth candle is the *shamash* (the servant candle) from which the other candles are lit.

Foods cooked with oil – such as doughnuts and *latkes* (potato cakes) – are traditional to remember the miracle with oil that kept the Temple lights burning so many years ago. A game of *dreidel*, a special, small, spinning top, is popular with children to commemorate 'the great miracle that happened there/here'.

Like many Jewish festivals this is a time for celebrating freedom and independence. The positioning of the lighted candles in the window is an expression of liberty, and the giving of small presents to children each day underlines the role of the family in planning for the future they might not have had.

a) pp 201-205; b) pp 90-91, 104-106, 109, 143-144.

More information at ...

1. [About Judaism: What is Hanukkah?](#)
2. [History of Hanukkah](#)
3. [Torahtots – Fun games: Hanukah](#)
4. [Images for Hanukah](#)
5. [Jewfaq: Chanukkah](#)

Saturday, 8 December, 2018

BODHI DAY *Buddhist*

Buddhists around the world celebrate Gautama's attainment of Enlightenment in 596 BCE on this day while sitting under a Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, in Northern India. Many consider this to be the most sacred of holy places as it was the birth place of their tradition. Bodhi Day is celebrated in many mainstream Mahayan traditions, including Zen, and in Pure Land Buddhist schools in China, Japan and Korea. Buddhists commemorate the day by meditating, studying the *Dharma* (teaching), chanting *sutras* (Buddhist texts) and performing kind acts toward other beings. Some celebrate by a traditional meal of tea, cakes and readings.

Siddhartha Gautama, who would later become the Buddha, was a prince in Nepal who had lived a comfortable and sheltered life under the care of his family. When he grew up he travelled about, witnessing the misery of old age, sickness, and suffering. These profoundly affected him, and at the age of 29, he chose to leave his comfortable surroundings and seek meaning in life.

After spending six years living the life of an ascetic and serving under six teachers, he was still unsatisfied. He tried many different disciplines, even going so far as to survive by eating only one grain of rice per day, but he soon realized that this was not the way to achieve what he sought. Unable to find answers to his questions, he vowed that he would sit under the Bodhi tree (sometimes called the Pipal tree or Bo tree in certain texts) until his way was clear.

Siddhartha fasted and meditated under this tree for a week, and on the morning of the eighth day came to several realizations which were to become the principles of modern Buddhism. It was here, as Siddhartha meditated and gazed upon Venus rising, that the basis of The Noble Eightfold Path and Four Noble Truths were born.

From this point forward he was referred to as the Buddha - The Enlightened One. He was also known as Shakyamuni (the sage of the Shakya clan) Buddha.

Bodhi Day (or Rohatsu), the day of enlightenment, can be celebrated in many ways. To the Buddhist monk it is a day of remembrance and meditation. To the lay people a good way of recognizing this important event in Buddhism is to dwell on its meaning and to place in the home reminders of this event. Often, coloured lights are strung about the home to recognize the day of enlightenment. They are multi-coloured to symbolize the many pathways to enlightenment. The lights are turned on each evening beginning on December 8th and for 30 days thereafter. A candle is also lit for these thirty days to symbolize enlightenment.

In Buddhist homes, a ficus tree of the genus *ficus religiosa* is often displayed. Beginning on Bodhi Day, these trees are decorated with multi-coloured lights, strung with beads to symbolize the way all things are united, and they are hung with three shiny ornaments to represent the Three Jewels - The *Buddha*, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha*. Sujata offered The Buddha milk and rice which helped him to regain his strength on his pathway to enlightenment. A breakfast of milk and rice would be an appropriate way to start Bodhi day with mindfulness.

a) pp 45-47, 49-50, 54; b) pp 30, 32-35, 33.

More information at ...

1. [How to Celebrate Bodhi Day](#)
2. [Belief.net: Beginners Heart - Happy Bodhi Day](#)
3. [Family Dharma Connection: Happy Bodhi Day](#)
4. [Images for Bodhi Day](#)
5. [Bodhi Day marks the Buddha's Enlightenment](#)

Saturday, 8 December, 2018

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *Christian (Roman Catholic)*

Celebrates the doctrine held mainly by Roman Catholics that Mary herself was born free from Original Sin, leaving her sinless for the conception and bearing of Jesus.

a) p 96; b) pp 49, 54-55.

More information at ...

1. [The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption](#)
2. [About Catholicism: What is the Immaculate Conception?](#)
3. [BBC Religions: The Immaculate Conception](#)
4. [Mary's Immaculate Conception](#)
5. [New Advent: Immaculate Conception](#)

Monday, 10 December, 2018

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY *National*

In 1948 The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'All human beings are born with equal and inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms.'

More information at ...

1. [United Nations Human Rights: What are human rights?](#)
2. [OHCHR: United Nations/Human Rights](#)
3. [NRCAT - Torture is a Moral Issue: Sign the Statement](#)
4. [Images for Human Rights Day](#)
5. [Quotes about Human Rights](#)

Friday, 21 December, 2018

WINTER SOLSTICE (Alban Arthan or Alban Arthuan) Druid

Friday, 21 December

YULE Pagan

Yule is the time of the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, when the sun is reborn, an image of the return of all new life. Heathens celebrate Yule for twelve nights and days, starting the evening before the Winter Solstice (called Mother's night) when they think of their female ancestors and spiritual protectors. The night heralds the beginning of the major holiday in Heathenry.

Yule, (pronounced EWE-elle) is when the dark half of the year relinquishes to the light half. Starting the next morning at sunrise, the sun climbs just a little higher and stays a little longer in the sky each day. Known as Solstice Night, or the longest night of the year, the sun's 'rebirth' is celebrated with much joy. On this night, the rebirth of the Oak King is celebrated, the Sun King, the Giver of Life that warmed the frozen Earth. From this day forward, the days become longer.

The summer and the winter solstices are classic examples of the wheel of the year, marking the end of one phase and the beginning of another. The key aspect of Yule is the spirit of hopefulness that the lengthening days bring, with their reminder of how much there is ahead to celebrate and enjoy.

More information at ...

1. [Wicca: The Winter Solstice - Yule Lore](#)
2. [Pagan/Wiccan: All About Yule](#)
3. [Why Christmas: Customs - The History of the Yule Log](#)
4. [Images for Yule Cards](#)
5. [You Call it Christmas, We Call it Yule](#)

Monday, 24 December, 2018

CHRISTMAS EVE *Christian*

Evening carol services, crib services and Midnight Masses inaugurate the festival of Christmas. Santa Claus (from the Dutch *Sinter Klaus*) is a legendary figure, based on St Nicholas of Myra, and is supposed to bring presents to children on Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

a) pp 83-84; b) p 50.

More information at ...

1. [Fish Eaters: Christmas Eve and Christmas Day](#)
2. [BBC Religion: The Story of Christmas](#)
3. [Project Britain - Christmas Eve Traditions](#)
4. [Traditional Christmas Songs](#)
5. [Why Christmas: Christmas Eve Traditions and Customs](#)

Tuesday, 25 December, 2018

CHRISTMAS DAY *Christian (see also 6/7 January 2018)*

Christmas Day Celebrates the birth of Jesus, whom Christians believe to be the son of God. The words of St John's Gospel (Chapter 1:1-18) are read in many churches at this time; these speak of 'the Word made flesh', pointing to Christian belief in the Incarnation (God 'made flesh', or human). Gifts are given as reminders of the offerings brought to the infant Jesus at Bethlehem, and Christmas carols, plays and evergreens are associated with this time, while nativity sets are displayed in many churches and in some homes.

Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-7.

a) pp 83-85; b) pp 12-13, 16, 38, 46-51, 58, 81, 136, 141-143, iv.

More information at ...

1. [CBN: The Real Meaning of Christmas](#)
2. [Anno Mundi: The True Meaning of Christmas](#)
3. [Office Holidays: Christmas Day](#)
4. [More Images for Christmas Day](#)
5. [The Huffington Post: The True Meaning of Christmas](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 26 December, 2018

Zoroastrian (Iranian)

Thursday, 24 May, 2018

Zoroastrian (Parsi - Shenshai)

ZARATOSHT NO DISO

Zoroastrian

Zaratosht no diso is the death anniversary of the Prophet Zarathushtra and is a sorrowful occasion. Tradition records that this is when he was assassinated at the age of 77. It is customary to visit the Fire Temple, participate in special remembrance prayers to him and to the *Fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors), and ponder upon the *Gathas* or Hymns of Zarathushtra, which embody his eternal message to humanity.

No one knows how Zarathushtra died, allegedly at age 77. Many legends, and several Zoroastrian traditions, say that he was killed, while praying in the sanctuary, by a foreign enemy of the king; but many scholars believe that Zarathushtra died peacefully.

Although this day is an occasion of sadness, there is an eternal optimism at the heart of Zoroastrian belief which shines through even the darkest of days such as this.

a) p 255; b) p 131

More information at ...

1. [Zartosht no Diso - a History](#)
2. [I Love India: Festivals/Zartosht-no-diso Celebrations](#)
3. [Crystal Links: Zoroaster and Death](#)
4. [The Parsee Society: Images for Zartosht no diso](#)
5. [Important Zoroastrian Festivals](#)

Monday, 31 December, 2018

OMISOKA *Japanese*

Japanese festival which prepares for the new year by cleansing Shinto home shrines and Buddhist altars. The bells of Buddhist temples are struck 108 times to warn against the 108 evils to be overcome.

a) p 168; b) pp 88, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Kidzworld: Omisoka - Japanese New Year](#)
2. [Two accounts of Omisoka celebrations](#)
3. [Japan - Kidsweb: Omisoka - Ushering in the New Year](#)
4. [Zooming Japan; Omisoka - Japanese New Year's Eve](#)
5. [Bella Online: Japanese Festivals - Omisoka - New Year's Eve](#)

Monday, 31 December, 2018

HOGMANAY *National*

A celebration widely observed throughout the UK, and especially in Scotland where bagpipes, *haggis* and first footing are widespread. Clearing one's debts, cleaning the house, welcoming guests and strangers and a host of other traditions feature at this time.

More information at ...

1. [BBC News: Hogmanay celebrations: Scotland brings in the new year](#)
2. [Rampant Scotland - Hogmanay](#)
3. [Hogmanay-top-facts](#)
4. [British Food and Drink: Hogmanay](#)
5. [Hogmanay](#)

7. CALENDAR OF DATES AND DESCRIPTIONS

2019 2019 2019 2019 2019 2019

JANUARY 2019

Michelle Obama

Here is the first of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Michelle Robinson was born in January, 1964 in Chicago; her African-American background included slavery. She enjoyed warm childhood years, which included a three hour daily commute for primary school and Methodist church attendance. Energy, popularity and success followed her throughout her education and her university studies in social science at Princeton and law at Harvard. Both as a student and practising lawyer she was active in the interests of racial and gender equality and made support for those unfairly treated a priority. In 1992 she married Barack Obama, with whom she subsequently served as America's First Lady during the eight years of his Presidency. The need to maintain the balance between work and family life is still one of the priorities which, along with healthy eating, she thinks is fundamental.

<https://www.biography.com/people/michelle-obama-307592>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/17/t-magazine/michelle-obama-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-gloria-steinem-letter.html>

<http://www.theedadvocate.org/7-education-initiatives-led-by-michelle-obama/>

<http://www.beliefnet.com/love-family/2009/01/michelle-obama-quotes.aspx?p=10>

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/white-house/article124956869.html>

<https://www.c-span.org/person/?michelleobama>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=michelle+obama+religion&sa=N&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&ved=0ahUKEwip5avnwofbAhXBesAKHVyyADM4ChCwBAhJ&biw=1366&bih=637>

Tuesday, 1 January, 2019

NEW YEAR'S DAY / HOGMANAY *National*

A day widely observed throughout the UK, as is New Year's Eve the preceding night, and especially in Scotland where bagpipes, *haggis* and first footing are widespread. It is customary to make New Year's Resolutions at this time.

More information at ...

1. [BBC News: Hogmanay celebrations: Scotland brings in the new year](#)
2. [Rampant Scotland - Hogmanay](#)
3. [Hogmanay-top-facts](#)
4. [British Food and Drink: Hogmanay](#)
5. [Hogmanay](#)

Tuesday, 1 January – Thursday, 3 January

GANJITSU *Japanese*

New Year's Day celebrations in Japan are sometimes extended for up to three days, during which businesses are closed, families spend time together, decorations are put up and the first visit of the year is paid to local Shinto shrines.

a) p 153-154; b) pp 82-83.

More information at ...

1. [Guide to Japan – New Year - Ganjitsu](#)
2. [Asian Society: Japanese New Year](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Ganjitsu](#)
4. [Japanese New Year has arrived - its Ganjitsu](#)
5. [Ganjitsu: Japanese New Year](#)

Tuesday, 1 January

THE NAMING AND THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS / MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Christian

This day celebrates the circumcision or naming of Jesus at eight days old in accordance with Jewish custom, as recorded in Luke 2:21.

More information at ...

1. [Thinking Anglicans](#)
2. [Circumstitions - Why Christians need not be circumcised](#)
3. [The circumcision - parallel versions of the Bible account](#)
4. [Video - the Presentation of Christ in the Temple](#)
5. [Godward Archives: The Man who circumcised Jesus](#)

Saturday, 5 January 2019 (Nanakshahi Calendar)

Sunday, 13 January 2019 (Lunar Calendar)

BIRTHDAY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH (1666 CE) Sikh

This day is celebrated as the birth anniversary of the tenth Guru, who instituted the Five Ks and established the Order of the *Khalsa* on Vaisakhi (Baisakhi).

Gobind Rai was born on December 22, 1666. His father was Guru Tegh Bahadur, the 9th Guru of Sikhism. In 1675 at the age of nine he became the 10th Guru on his father's death and was the last of the ten human Gurus of the Sikhs. He was a student of Punjabi, Sanskrit, Brj Bhasha, Arabian, Persian and a number of other languages, and was highly regarded for his wisdom and leadership qualities. Throughout his life he wrote many poems about love, the worship of the Divine, equality and the putting away of superstition and idolatry.

On his birthday, historical lectures are conducted and poems are recited in praise of the Guru. Special dishes that are unique to this occasion are prepared and served during the festivities. Like other anniversaries associated with the lives of the Gurus, the day is referred to as a *gurpurb*, and is marked by the ending of an *akhand path*, an unbroken reading of the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib. This lasts for 48 hours.

In April 1699 Gobind Rai established the Order of the Khalsa after which point all initiated Sikh males were given the name **Singh** (meaning **lion**), and females the name **Kaur** (meaning **leader**) to emphasise equality and to remove caste distinctions. The Guru asked his devotees to bless him with initiation into the Khalsa and became Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru was a military genius, and when other approaches failed, he accepted the use of power and the sword to fight against tyranny in the defence of religious freedom. He fought twelve battles and his four sons were killed in campaigns against Mughal oppression. He instilled a martial spirit into his followers so that they would not fear the persecutions of the Mughal Emperors. He also gave Sikhs the new greeting of '*Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki Fateh*', meaning 'The *Khalsa* belongs to God; all victory is the victory of God'.

In 1708 Guru Gobind Singh was assassinated as he attempted to make peace with the Emperor, Bahadur Shah I. He left a great number of writings and his greatest contribution to Sikh tradition is that he instructed his disciples to consider the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the collection of writings from the previous Gurus), as their eternal Guru, and that this would be the source of the Gurus' teachings, which would guide all their future decisions.

a) pp 240-242, 244; b) pp 123, 126.

More information at ...

1. [Global World: Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh](#)
2. [Time and Date Holidays: Guru Govind Singh](#)
3. [Guru Gobind Singh Ji 1606-1708](#)
4. [Guru Govind Singh in Images and Cards](#)
5. [Sikh Dharma: Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday](#)

Sunday, 6 January, 2019

EPIPHANY *Christian (Anglican and Roman Catholic)*

This is the 'twelfth day of Christmas', but in the Church calendar the Epiphany season lasts until the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The festival commemorates the first two occasions on which, according to Christian belief, Jesus' divinity was manifested: when the three kings (also known as the wise men or Magi) visited the infant Jesus in Bethlehem, bearing symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; and when John the Baptist baptised Jesus in the River Jordan. The Roman Catholic and Protestant churches emphasize the visit of the Magi when they celebrate the Epiphany; the Orthodox churches focus on Jesus' baptism.

Epiphany means manifestation or showing forth. It is also called Theophany (manifestation of God), especially by Orthodox Christians. Some Orthodox churches consider Jesus' baptism to be the first step towards the crucifixion. The liturgical colour for the Epiphany season is white.

In many parts of Europe, the celebration of Epiphany is at least as important as the celebration of Christmas. While in England and her historical colonies the custom has long been to give gifts on Christmas Day itself, in Italy and other Mediterranean countries, Christians exchange gifts on Three Kings' Day - the day on which the Wise Men brought their gifts to the Christ Child.

In some European countries, such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia, children dress as the three kings and visit houses. In their roles as the kings, or wise men, they sing about the birth of Jesus and pay homage to the 'king of kings'. They are rewarded with praise and cookies.

'Dia de los Reyes Magos' is the Latin American celebration of Epiphany, where it is the three wise men and not Santa Claus who bring gifts. Children write letters to the wise men telling them how good they have been and what gifts they want. In France 'Le Jour des Rois' (the Day of Kings), sometimes called the 'Fête des Rois', is celebrated with parties both for children and for adults. The 'galette des rois', or cake of kings, highlights these celebrations. This cake is round and flat, cut in the pantry, covered with a white napkin and carried into the dining room.

Children in Spain often fill their shoes with straw or grain (for the three kings' horses to eat) and place them on balconies or by the front door on Epiphany Eve. The next day they find cookies, sweets or gifts in their place. In many Spanish cities the 'three kings' make an entry on Epiphany Eve, accompanied by military bands and drummers in medieval dress. Some countries in the Mediterranean welcome the 'magic wise men' who arrive by boat, bearing presents for children.

The gift of gold was the gift people usually gave to their King. By offering gold they were recognising Jesus as their King. The second gift, frankincense, is a white gum from a tree which, when hardened, will burn giving off a fragrant smell. It was burnt as an offering to God during worship, used as a medicine and a perfume. The third gift, myrrh, also a gum from a thorny tree, was used for healing wounds because it is an antiseptic that soothes redness and relieves pain, and so acts as a symbol of future suffering.

Epiphany is the day when some say that all Christmas decorations should be taken down, since otherwise bad luck will follow.

Matthew 21:1-12.

a) pp 79, 86; b) pp 48-51, 59.

More information at ...

1. [Time and Date: Epiphany](#)
2. [What is Epiphany?](#)
3. [Topmarks Education - Epiphany](#)
4. [Catholic holydays and holidays - Epiphany](#)
5. [What is Epiphany?](#)

Sunday, 6 January 2019

THEOPHANY / BAPTISM OF CHRIST *Christian (Orthodox) - see 19 January for Julian Calendar)*

At Theophany Orthodox Christians commemorate the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist; they recall how at this event the heavens were opened and a voice was heard proclaiming Jesus, while God's spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. During this event God was manifest as three persons in one – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 'Theophany' means 'Manifestation of God'. The first miracle of Jesus, performed at Cana in Galilee, is also remembered at this time.

More information at ...

1. [Orthodox Christians celebrate the Epiphany in cold water](#)
2. [Theophany in the Orthodox Church](#)
3. [The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan](#)
4. [Orthodox Epiphany in the River Jordan](#)
5. [Coptic celebration of Theophany](#)

Sunday, 6 January, 2019 / Monday, 7 January, 2019

CHRISTMAS EVE AND DAY Christian – Rastafarian and Ethiopian Orthodox

Many Orthodox and Armenian churches, and certain others related to them (including the Ethiopian and Rastafarian communities) still use the Julian, rather than the Gregorian Calendar, that is currently used by Western Christians. Accordingly they celebrate Christmas and certain other festivals thirteen days after the Western churches, so that the 6th and 7th of January in the Orthodox calendar equate to the 24th and 25th December in the Western one.

The focus of their celebrations is the arrival of the three Wise Men to celebrate the birth of the infant Jesus, supported by the belief that one of them came from Ethiopia. Rastafarian tradition holds that Baltazar (Balthasar), one of the Three Kings, was from Ethiopia, and is often depicted as a black man even in the West. In Ethiopia, *Lidät* is celebrated with a special service at church. The more devout will fast on the *gahad* (Christmas Eve), and the even more devout for 40 days prior. At home, a big feast is prepared. No tree, no snow, no mistletoe. The main decoration depicts the Manger scene, where the Three Kings pay homage to the Infant. Tradition has it that Balthasar, the Ethiopian King, brought the frankincense. And, only children get presents. On this day, children play a hockey-like game called Genna, from where we get the alternative name of the Feast.

More information at ...

1. [Why do Russians celebrate Christmas on January 7th?](#)
2. [Orthodox Christmas Day](#)
3. [Topmarks - Christmas/Epiphany](#)
4. [A Serbian Christmas Eve and Eastern European Food](#)
5. [The Calendar of the Orthodox Church](#)

To Rastafarians this is a time not only to celebrate the birth of Jesus in the manner prescribed by tradition, but also to reflect on this event in the context of the original prophecy of his birth, seen as a manifestation of God not only as Priest but as King. The focus on January 7th as the date of his birth is held to be more accurate than the Western choice of a date with pagan connotations relating to the winter solstice.

Rastafarian Christmas celebrations in particular are lively and vibrant, and are evidence of the buoyant nature of these communities and their customs. At the same time the theological message of the incarnation is always visible in their corporate worship.

More information at ...

1. [RastaMind - Merry Reggae Christmas](#)
2. [Do Rastafarians celebrate Christmas?](#)
3. [Rastafari - An Introduction for Beginners](#)
4. [Rastarian Christmas in Pictures](#)
5. [Beliefs, Practices and Sacraments of Rastafari](#)

Sunday, 6 January, 2019 or Sunday, 13 January 2019

ANNUAL METHODIST COVENANT SERVICE *Christian*

On the first (or sometimes the second) Sunday of the new year Methodists celebrate an annual Covenant Service in which they pledge themselves to the service of God using a specific form of words.

The service has Puritan origins and dates back to the time of John Wesley. His idea of Covenant was basic to his understanding of Christian discipleship. He saw the relationship with God in a Covenant with his people as being like a marriage between human beings (individuals or en masse) on the one side and God in Christ on the other (cf. Ephesians 5.21-33).

His original Covenant Prayer involved taking Christ as "my Head and Husband, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, for all times and conditions, to love, honour and obey thee before all others, and this to the death".

The present day service has as its stirring climax the following words:

I am no longer my own but yours.

Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;

put me to doing,
put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you,
or laid aside for you,
exalted for you,

or brought low for you;
let me be full,

let me be empty,
let me have all things,
let me have nothing:

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

you are mine and I am yours. So be it.

And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.'

More Information at:

1. [What is distinctive about the Methodist Covenant Service with God](#)
2. [The words of the annual Methodist Covenant Service](#)
3. [The history of the Methodist Covenant Renewal Service](#)
4. [A United Methodist form of worship for the annual Covenant renewal service](#)
5. [An Anglican/Methodist Covenant](#)

Saturday, 12 January 2019

BIRTHDAY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA *Hindu*

Born Narendra Nath Datta in 1863 in Calcutta, he was an Indian Hindu monk who became the chief disciple of the 19th century saint Ramakrishna. Vivekananda, as he became known, was a key figure in the introduction of the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world and helped to develop Hinduism during the latter part of the 19th century to the stage where it held the status of a major world religion. He died in 1902. He pioneered the development of the Ramakrishna Mission and the creation of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre movement first in India and then throughout the world, travelling widely and emphasising the devotional and social aspects of the teaching and practice of his beloved Guru, Ramakrishna.

More information at ...

1. [Swami Vivekananda: Life and Teachings](#)
2. [Vedanta Centre UK](#)
3. [Vivekananda and the Vedanta Network](#)
4. [50 Inspiring and Motivational Quotes from Swami Vivekananda](#)
5. [Vedanta philosophy](#)

Sunday, 13 January 2019

BAPTISM OF CHRIST (*Ang*) / **BAPTISM OF THE LORD** (*RC*) *Christian*
(*Some Orthodox Churches observe on the Julian date: 19 January*)

Christians commemorate the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist; they recall how at this event the heavens were opened and a voice was heard proclaiming Jesus, while God's spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. During this event God was manifest as three persons in one – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The first miracle of Jesus, performed at Cana in Galilee, is also remembered at this time.

More information at ...

1. [Theopedia - The Baptism of Jesus](#)
2. [The Feast of the Epiphany - the Feast of Lights](#)
3. [The Baptism of Jesus](#)
4. [Paintings in Miniature of the Baptism of Jesus](#)
5. [Where was Jesus Baptised?](#)

Sunday, 13 January 2019 (Lunar Calendar)

Saturday, 5 January 2019 (Nanakshahi Calendar)

BIRTHDAY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH (1666 CE) *Sikh*

This day is celebrated as the birth anniversary of the tenth Guru, who instituted the Five Ks and established the Order of the *Khalsa* on Vaisakhi (Baisakhi).

Gobind Rai was born on December 22, 1666. His father was Guru Tegh Bahadur, the 9th Guru of Sikhism. In 1675 at the age of nine he became the 10th Guru on his father's death and was the last of the ten human Gurus of the Sikhs. He was a student of Punjabi, Sanskrit, Brj Bhasha, Arabian, Persian and a number of other languages, and was highly regarded for his wisdom and leadership qualities. Throughout his life he wrote many poems about love, the worship of the Divine, equality and the putting away of superstition and idolatry.

On his birthday, historical lectures are conducted and poems are recited in praise of the Guru. Special dishes that are unique to this occasion are prepared and served during the festivities. Like other anniversaries associated with the lives of the Gurus, the day is referred to as a *gurpurb*, and is marked by the ending of an *akhand path*, an unbroken reading of the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib. This lasts for 48 hours.

In April 1699 Gobind Rai established the Order of the Khalsa after which point all initiated Sikh males were given the name **Singh** (meaning **lion**), and females the name **Kaur** (meaning **leader**) to emphasise equality and to remove caste distinctions. The Guru asked his devotees to bless him with initiation into the Khalsa and became Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru was a military genius, and when other approaches failed, he accepted the use of power and the sword to fight against tyranny in the defence of religious freedom. He fought twelve battles and his four sons were killed in campaigns against Mughal oppression. He instilled a martial spirit into his followers so that they would not fear the persecutions of the Mughal Emperors. He also gave Sikhs the new greeting of '*Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki Fateh*', meaning 'The *Khalsa* belongs to God; all victory is the victory of God'.

In 1708 Guru Gobind Singh was assassinated as he attempted to make peace with the Emperor, Bahadur Shah I. He left a great number of writings and his greatest contribution to Sikh tradition is that he instructed his disciples to consider the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the collection of writings from the previous Gurus), as their eternal Guru, and that this would be the source of the Gurus' teachings, which would guide all their future decisions.

a) pp 240-242, 244; b) pp 123, 126.

More information at ...

1. [Global World: Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh](#)
2. [Time and Date Holidays: Guru Govind Singh](#)
3. [Guru Gobind Singh Ji 1606-1708](#)
4. [Guru Govind Singh in Images and Cards](#)
5. [Sikh Dharma: Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday](#)

***Monday, 14 January 2019 / Tuesday, 15 January 2019**

MAKAR SANKRANTI / PONGAL / LOHRI *Hindu*

Sankranti (Sangrand in Punjabi) is the start of a new zodiac sign i.e. the date is based on the solar rather than the lunar calendar. Tamils celebrate Pongal and eat a rice dish which gives the festival its name. For many Hindus it is a day for almsgiving and patching up quarrels and disagreements. Punjabis (including some Sikhs) celebrate the day as Lohri. Fires are lit outside and peanuts and sesame sweets are eaten round them. The traditional Punjabi meal consists of cornmeal chapatis and a mustard leaf dish. If a baby boy has been born during the previous year he is carried around the fire.

a) p 113; b) pp 63-64, 75.

More information at ...

1. [Hindu Festivals – Makar Sankranti](#)
2. [About Hinduism: Festivals/Lohri](#)
3. [SCFI - Lohri](#)
4. [Greetings Cards - Makar Sankranti](#)
5. [Makar Sankranti: Reaping the Benefits of the Season](#)

Wednesday, 16 January 2019

SHINRAN MEMORIAL DAY *Buddhist*

Shinran Shonin (1173-1262) was the founder of Jodo Shin-shu (or Shin Buddhism), one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism. It is celebrated by some Mahayana Buddhists
More information at ...

1. [Shinran Shonin - Buddhist Reformer](#)
2. [Shinran - Trailblazing Founder of Jodo Shinshu](#)
3. [Three Letters of Master Shinran's Wife, Eshinni, to their Daughter, Kakushinni](#)
4. [Notes on the wasan of Shinran](#)
5. [Shinran - a peaceful Buddhist thinker - by George Gatenby](#)

Saturday, 19 January 2019

THEOPHANY / BAPTISM OF CHRIST *Christian (Orthodox - Julian Calendar)*

At Theophany Orthodox Christians commemorate the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist; they recall how at this event the heavens were opened and a voice was heard proclaiming Jesus, while God's spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. During this event God was manifest as three persons in one – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 'Theophany' means 'Manifestation of God'. The first miracle of Jesus, performed at Cana in Galilee, is also remembered at this time.

More information at ...

1. [Orthodox Christians celebrate the Epiphany in cold water](#)
2. [Theophany in the Orthodox Church](#)
3. [The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan](#)
4. [Orthodox Epiphany in the River Jordan](#)
5. [Coptic celebration of Theophany](#)

Sunday, 20 January 2019

WORLD RELIGION DAY *Baha'i and other faiths*

This day promotes interfaith understanding by emphasizing factors common to all faiths. It was first introduced among Baha'i communities in the 1950s, and is now celebrated by a wider spread of communities, including the Baha'i, on the third Sunday of January.

More information at ...

1. [Time and Date - World Religion Day](#)
2. [Blog: World Religion Day](#)
3. [Holiday Lessons for Children for World Religion Day](#)
4. [Images for World Religions Day](#)
5. [Huffington Post - Baha'i World Religion Day](#)

Monday, 21 January, 2019

TU B'SHEVAT Jewish

A popular minor festival which celebrates the New Year for trees. Jewish tradition marks the 15th of Shevat as the day when the sap in the trees begins to rise, heralding the beginning of spring. It is customary for Jews all over the world to plant young trees at this time and to eat fruit produced in Israel. For religious accounting purposes all trees have their anniversaries on this festival, regardless of when they were planted.

a) p 209; b) pp 108-109.

More information at ...

1. [Jewfaq - Holidays - Tu B'Shevat](#)
2. [Aish – Tu Bshvat - New Year for Trees](#)
3. [Tu B'Shevat for Tots](#)
4. [Images for Tu B'Shevat](#)
5. [My Jewish Learning -Tu B'ishvat](#)

Friday, 25 January 2019

HONEN MEMORIAL DAY *Buddhist*

Honen (1133-1212 CE) is one of the outstanding figures in the history of Japanese Buddhism, and was the founder of Jodo Shinshu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.

More information at ...

1. [Mythic Maps - Honen Memorial Day](#)
2. [What and Where is the Pure Land?](#)
3. [Kyoto National Museum: The Illustrated Biography of Priest Honen](#)
4. [Honen and the Chion-in](#)
5. [New World Encyclopedia entry for Honen](#)

Sunday, 27 January 2019

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY National

This is a remembrance day for all the different categories of people who suffered at the hands of the Nazis during the second World War (1939-45). It aims to keep fresh in the mind the memory of those who suffered and died at that period, and to help ensure that no such atrocity happens again. The date was chosen as the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, but for many it is appropriate to remember others who have been victims of subsequent acts of genocide elsewhere in the world.

Holocaust Memorial Day remembers especially the millions of people who were killed in Auschwitz and other concentration camps. More than a million people were killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau, a Nazi death camp in German-occupied Poland, during World War Two. The majority were Jews and the former extermination camp has become the world's largest Jewish cemetery; but the site was also the death place for many people who did not fit into the Nazis' view of their world: Poles, lesbians, homosexuals and the disabled were amongst those killed here.

Many of the concentration camps set up by the Nazis in World War Two were razed to the ground towards the end of the war, but this Nazi German death camp was liberated before it was completely destroyed. Now it has become a museum, and a focus for people of all nations, and especially for the young, to visit as pilgrims.

The Holocaust began in 1933 when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. It ended in 1945 when Allied powers defeated the Nazis. Jewish people were excluded from public life on September 15th, 1935 when the Nuremberg Laws were issued. These laws also stripped German Jews of their citizenship and their right to marry Germans.

Kristallnacht occurred on November 9th and 10th, 1938. Nazis pillaged, burned synagogues, broke windows of Jewish-owned businesses, and attacked Jewish people in Austria and Germany. 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps. In prison camps, prisoners were forced to do hard physical labour. Torture and death within concentration camps were common and frequent.

Once World War II began, the Nazis ordered all Jews to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothing so they could be easily targeted. Jews were forced to live in specific areas of the city called ghettos after the beginning of World War II. In the larger ghettos, up to 1,000 people a day were picked up and brought by train to concentration camps or death camps.

11 million people were killed during the Holocaust (1.1 million children). 6 million of those victims were Jewish. Other groups targeted by the Nazis were Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, disabled people, and Roma. Two-thirds of Jewish people living in Europe at the time of World War II were killed by Nazis.

1. [Holocaust Memorial Day Trust - Information and Resources](#)
2. [The Guardian: Holocaust Remembrance Day](#)
3. [Facts about the Holocaust](#)
4. [Holocaust Memorial Day - Remembering the Horror of Auschwitz](#)
5. [Holocaust Memorial Day - 10 reasons it's essential we never forget this uniquely evil event](#)

Wednesday, 30 January 2019

JASHN-E SADEH *Zoroastrian (Iranian)*

Jashn-e Sadeh is a mid winter festival, celebrated 50 days and nights before the advent of the spring NoRuz, and signifies that the days are getting longer. On this day it is customary to pay visits to the Fire Temple to give thanks to the Creator God, to celebrate with a bonfire after sunset, to recite the *Atash Niyayeesh* or litany to fire, listen to stories of the legendary Iranians during the reign of King Hoshang, who discovered the art of making fire, share piping hot stew and bread, and enjoy the dancing and merry making.

a) pp 254-255; b) p 131.

More information at ...

1. [Farsi: Jashn-e Sadeh - Festival of Fire](#)
2. [Farsinet: Jashn-e Sadeh](#)
3. [Discovery of Fire - and Jashn-e-Sadeh](#)
4. [Celebration of Jashn-e-Sadeh in Iran](#)
5. [An Introduction to Jashne-e Sadeh - Fire Festival](#)

FEBRUARY 2019

Desmond Doss

Here is the second of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Desmond Doss was born in February 1919 in Virginia, USA. In accordance with his family's faith he had attended a Seventh Day Adventist school and this made him sensitive regarding the principles of treating Saturday as a day of reverential rest and of avoiding the injury of his fellow human beings. On leaving school he worked in shipbuilding as a carpenter. He recognised the significance of the Second World War by volunteering to serve as a medic whilst refusing to carry a weapon. In consequence of this decision, he was mocked by many of his fellow service-men, but repeatedly demonstrated huge courage and remarkable determination to save the lives of others. His story as a Conscientious Objector has been dramatized in the Mel Gibson film *Hacksaw Ridge*, which vividly conveys the horrific brutality of war, and at the same time represents him without any exaggeration as an astonishing person of belief. It focuses on his actions when his army unit was challenged to secure an escarpment in the Okinawa region of Japan.

http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/dvb/bio.asp?b=Doss_Desmond_Thomas

<http://www.desmonddoss.com/medal-of-honor>

<http://www.desmonddoss.com/response-evangelism>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKdwsWdH3A4>

<http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/hacksaw-ridge>

<http://www.philtar.ac.uk/encyclopedia/christ/esp/advent.html>

Friday, 1 February 2019

IMBOLC/CANDLEMAS Pagan

Imbolc, also called Oimelc and Candlemas, celebrates the awakening of the land and the growing power of the Sun. Snowdrops, which appear at this time of the year, are seen as the heralds of spring.

[More information at...](#)

[1. Chalice Centre - Imbolc](#)

[2. History of Imbolc](#)

[3. Imbolc - As the light lengthens, so the cold strengthens](#)

[4. Imbolc through images](#)

[5. Celtic Lore for Imbolc](#)

Saturday, 2 February 2019

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE / CANDLEMAS *Christian (Anglican)*
THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD *Christian (Roman Catholic)*

This is often called **Candlemas** from the custom of congregations holding lighted candles during the celebration in church. It records the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and his recognition by the aged Simeon, expressed in the words of the *Nunc Dimittis*. The festival was formerly known as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary – reflecting Mary's following of Jewish tradition after the birth of a son.

Luke 2:22-38.

a) p 102; b) pp 48-49, 58-59.

More information at ...

1. [Candlemas - The Presentation of the Lord - the Church Year](#)
2. [The book of days - Candlemas](#)
3. [Project Britain - Candlemas Day](#)
4. [Presentation of the Lord in the Temple in pictures](#)
5. [Christian Holidays - Candlemass](#)

Sunday, 3 February, 2019

SETSUBUN/BEAN SCATTERING *Japanese*

The day for the Bean Scattering ceremony, performed both in homes and in temples.

a) p 156; b) pp 81, 83.

More information at ...

1. [How to throw beans at Setsubun](#)
2. [Setsubun: Bean Throwing Festival](#)
3. [Setsubun for Kids](#)
4. [Kyoto Guide: Setsubun and other annual events](#)
5. [Magazine Japan: Drive Away Evil Spirits with 'Setsubun'](#)

Tuesday, 5 February 2019

CHINESE NEW YEAR (OF THE PIG) / SPRING FESTIVAL / CHUNJIE / YUAN TAN *Chinese*
New Year's Day is the most important event in the traditional Chinese calendar and marks the beginning of the first lunar month. The festival is colourfully celebrated with fireworks, dances (such as the famous Lion Dance) and the giving of gifts, flowers and sweets. Gold is a dominant colour to symbolise the wish for prosperity, and red is also much used as a lucky colour. Business accounts should be settled and all debts paid before the New Year begins. Celebrations can last three or more days. 2019, which is 4717 in Chinese culture, is the year of the Pig, one of twelve symbolic creatures whose character is held to affect the nature of those born at this time.

Chinese New Year is actually celebrated for 15 consecutive days, but the first three days are most important. The 15th and final day is also a big event, where houses are decorated with an abundance of brightly coloured lights. It is a way of ending with a grand finale rather than the festivities just fading away gradually.

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are celebrated as a family affair, a time of reunion and thanksgiving. The celebration was traditionally highlighted with a religious ceremony given in honour of Heaven and Earth, the gods of the household and the family ancestors. The sacrifice to the ancestors, the most vital of all the rituals, united the living members with those who had passed away. Departed relatives are remembered with great respect because they were responsible for laying the foundations for the fortune and glory of the family.

The presence of the ancestors is acknowledged on New Year's Eve with a dinner arranged for them at the family banquet table. The spirits of the ancestors, together with the living, celebrate the onset of the New Year as one great community. The communal feast symbolises family unity and honours the past and present generations.

Chinese New Year celebrations are notable for colour, noise, giving gifts and paying debts. It is a time for looking both backwards and forwards.

a) pp 66-68; b) pp 40-41, 44, ii, iii.

More information at ...

1. [Chinese New Year - Travel Guide and much else](#)
2. [Public Holidays – Chinese New Year](#)
3. [Information for Teachers on the Chinese New Year](#)
4. [Chinese Zodiac Signs and Animals](#)
5. [A Charming New Year](#)

Tuesday, 5 February 2019 - Thursday, 7 February 2019

LOSAR *Buddhist*

Tibetan New Year festival, but it is often celebrated in Nepal as well. Although largely a secular celebration, it also includes the rededication of the country to Buddhism. It especially celebrates the miracles performed by the historical Buddha at Sravasti, the capital city of the kingdom of Kosala. It usually falls on or around the date of the Chinese New Year. 2018 is the Year of the Earth Dog.

More information at ...

1. [Losar - Tibetan New Year](#)
2. [Buddhist Holidays: Losar](#)
3. [The World's Best Festivals - Losar](#)
4. [Losar - Traditions and Dishes](#)
5. [Losar - Tibetan New Year](#)

Friday, 8 February 2019 (or Friday, 15 February 2019)

PARINIRVANA *Buddhist*

Mahayanists mark the final passing [away](#) from this world of Gautama Buddha at Kushinagara, India, at the age of 80. Pure Land Buddhists refer to it as *Nirvana* Day.

The Buddha's last days are described in the Pali text called the Great Parinirvana Sutra (*Parinirvana* meaning "completed *nirvana*"). The Buddha's living *nirvana* (achieved during enlightenment) at death transforms to *nirvana* without any human residue. Self-possessed, without psychological pain, untroubled by the thoughts of death, the Buddha identified four places of future pilgrimage: the sites of his birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death. "But" he added, "don't hinder yourself by honouring my remains."

Here is the heart of all Buddhist teaching about Life and Death, where entry into *nirvana* is the goal of all being, as shown to us today in the perfect example all Buddhists seek to emulate.

More information at ...

1. [BuddhaNet: Kusinara - Place of the Great Passing](#)
2. [About Buddhism - The Parinirvana of the Historical Buddha](#)
3. [Nirvana-Parinirvana-Enlightenment-Buddhahood](#)
4. [Images of the Parinirvana of the Buddha](#)
5. [MahaParinirvana and the Parinirvana of the Buddha](#)

***Saturday, 9 February 2019 / Sunday, February 10 2019**

SARASWATI PUJA/ VASANT PANCHAMI Hindu

BASANT Sikh (Punjabi)

This festival marks the beginning of Spring, and is widely celebrated in north India. In eastern India, and notably in Bengal, Hindus worship especially Saraswati, the goddess of learning and the arts. Yellow is particularly associated with the festival and so *murtis* of Saraswati are dressed in yellow. Another (secular) tradition is kite-flying, associated especially with the city of Lahore.

a) p 116; b) 65, 72, 75.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism - Saraswati Puja](#)
2. [Hinduism - Vasant Panchami](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Vasant Panchami](#)
4. [Saraswati Puja in pictures](#)
5. [Huffington Post - Saraswati Puja](#)

Tuesday, 19 February 2019

LANTERN FESTIVAL / YUANXIAOJIE / TENG CHIEH Chinese

This is the Lantern Festival which marks the first full moon of the year and the lengthening of the days. Strings of lanterns in various designs are hung out as decoration.

a) p 68; b) p 41.

More information at ...

1. [Chinese Fortune Calendar - Lantern Festival](#)
2. [China: English - Features - Festivals](#)
3. [Project Britain: Teng Chieh](#)
4. [Travel China Guide - Lantern Festival](#)
5. [Chinese New Year and Food for the Lantern Festival](#)

*** Tuesday, February 19 2019 or Thursday, March 21 2019**

MAGHA PUJA Buddhist

This festival commemorates two occasions, one that took place in the month of Magha, seven weeks after the Buddha's enlightenment. Five of his companions from his years of austerity had joined him and he taught them the Four Noble Truths; the other occasion was 45 years later, when 1,250 enlightened personal disciples of the Buddha came spontaneously to the Bamboo Grove at Rajagaha on the full moon of Magha (usually in late February or early March). This was one of the earliest large gatherings of Buddhists. On that day the Buddha taught the main principles of the Dhamma and set out his teachings to the assembled arahats (enlightened monks) for them to learn and follow.

On this later Magha Puja Day, the Buddha spoke to his disciple Ananda and told him that he was near the end of his life and had chosen to die in three months time. He also outlined a summary of his teachings and a code of discipline (which monks are expected to recite every fortnight). Magha Puja Day thus brackets the Buddha's teaching life, providing a reason as to why it is one of the most important Buddhist festivals. The day is normally observed with several hours of meditation, chanting and listening to sermons.

All 1250 of these monks were direct disciples of the Buddha, having been ordained by him at various stages of his life. As a result of this gathering of disciples, the full moon of Magha has also come to be known as 'Sangha day' and is a time when monks gather together to share their knowledge and experiences. In the West it falls towards the end of winter when many of the monasteries have just finished a long retreat, and such a gathering is a joyous time. Many will not have seen each other for some months, and with the arising of spring and the end of a long retreat there is much for them to share.

The day involves reflection on what it means to be part of the sangha - this including the fourfold sangha: lay men and women, monks and nuns; but because of the origin of the event it tends not to be so significant for lay people. For the ordained community who have come together there may be a series of meetings to discuss various aspects of the community's teachings, periods of group meditation, talks given by senior members of the community (both resident and visiting) and a variety of other events - often quite spontaneous - over a period of several days.

In Thailand, by contrast, it is very much a holiday time. At every Buddhist temple, Buddhists gather after dark. They bring flowers, incense, & candles. When these are lit, the worshippers circle the temple's main hall three times, once for each of the Three Jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Sangha, and the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha).

a) p 53 b) 34.

More information at ...

1. [Buddhamind: Festivals - Magha Puja](#)
2. [The Day of Four Marvellous Events](#)
3. [Dhammakaya - Magha Puja Day](#)
4. [Images of Magha Puja Day](#)
5. [Celebrating Magha Puja](#)

MARCH 2019

Stephen Hawking

Here is the third of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Stephen Hawking died in March 2018 at the age of 76. He was one of the world's best ever known scientists and, no less so, disabled human beings. His capacities in theoretical physics and cosmology, and, to articulate his research, his research speculations and findings, were remarkable. So too was his response to the challenge of physical immobility, increasing over 40 years to the extent that his words were communicated not even by finger pressure or raised eyebrows but by fluctuations in his cheek muscles. He was a person of strong will-power, determination and belief – but, he asserted, not in God. Though the version of God he rejected might also be rejected by many religious believers, and he probably never had the opportunity to engage with Buddhist and Hindu cosmologies, his impatience with wishful thinking and his commitment to social justice deserve unanimous support.

<https://www.cam.ac.uk/stephenhawking>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-mo_P9DkuA

<http://www.hawking.org.uk>

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/hawking>

<https://www.c-span.org/person/?stephenhawking>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/03/14/im-not-afraid-what-stephen-hawking-said-about-god-his-atheism-and-his-own-death/?utm_term=.499855bfccba

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Stephen-Hawking-Says-There-Is-No-God-Heres-Why>

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 1 March, 2019

ST DAVID'S DAY *National*

Anniversary of the death of St David, the patron saint of Wales, who lived in the 6th century CE. As monk, abbot and bishop he helped to spread Christianity among the Celtic tribes of western Britain.

a) p 260; b) p 135.

More information at ...

1. [Time and Date - St David's Day](#)
2. [How to have the most wonderful and welshiest St David's Day](#)
3. [Project Britain - St David's Day](#)
4. [St David's Day in pictures](#)
5. [St David's Cathedral](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 1 March 2019

THE WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER *Christian*

This international, interdenominational prayer movement was begun in 1887. The service material is produced by a different country each year. In 2019 the theme will be 'Jesus said to them: 'Come – Everything Is Ready', and the material has been prepared by Christian women in Slovenia.

More information at ...

1. [World Day of Prayer - Wikipedia](#)
2. [Fakenham Parish church celebrates Womens World Day of Prayer](#)
3. [St Katharine's Church, Blackpool - 'Receive children, receive me'](#)
4. [Images for Womens World Day of Prayer](#)
5. [Adventist Churches: International Women's Day of Prayer](#)

Sunday, 3 March, 2019

HINAMATSURI / DOLLS' FESTIVAL / GIRLS' DAY *Japanese*

Clay dolls representing the Emperor and Empress of Japan, reminiscent of the ancient Heian court, are displayed in the home; and offerings of peach blossom, rice-wine and rice-cakes are placed before them, along with miniature multi-coloured sweetmeats. The dolls are intended to carry away any illness afflicting or threatening the daughters of the house. The day is widely celebrated by praying for daughters to grow up to be healthy and dutiful.

Today in Japan some towns sell 'nagashi-bina' sets, paper doll pairs designed to be set afloat - already sitting in boats of wood or straw. There may even be a ceremony in which participants dress like the most elaborate hina dolls, and set them afloat.

The Japanese hold ceremonial burnings of many types of objects - needles and umbrellas, dolls and toys, papers, letters, and various other tokens of work accomplished during the year. In some places there is an annual burning of Daruma dolls, which represents the year's activities. The doll burning ceremony involves some kind of ceremonial cremation, possibly in the hope of conceiving healthy children.

The family lies at the heart of Hinamatsuri, and the health of its daughters is emphasised at this time each year to help ensure the future of the family line. There is an equal emphasis on both the role of the daughter and the respect for and obedience she owes to her parents.

a) pp 158-9; p 84.

More information at ...

1. [Girls' Day Dolls](#)
2. [Japanese About - Hinamatsuri](#)
3. [web-japan: Hinamatsuri](#)
4. [Hinamatsuri in Pictures](#)
5. [Kyoto National Museum - All about Japanese Hina Dolls](#)

Monday, 4 March 2019

MAHASHIVRATRI (Great Shiva Night) *Hindu*

Every night of the new moon is dedicated to Shiva, but this moonless night in February is particularly important since it is the night on which Shiva is said to perform the cosmic dance, the *Tandava Nritya*, the dance of primordial creation, preservation and destruction. Many Hindus and all devotees of Shiva fast throughout the festival. All-night prayers focus on Shiva and his shrines and statues, where milk, water and honey are regularly poured on his symbol, the *lingam*, which is decorated with flowers and garlands. The festival is observed for one day and one night only.

Pujas conducted in Shaivite temples during the previous day also have significance. This is because the rituals are conducted strictly in accordance with the method prescribed in the *Shiva Purana*, a Hindu epic. According to this *Purana*, *pujas* should be conducted once in every three hours on Mahashivaratri. According to Hindu mythology Lord Shiva declared that the rituals performed by his devotees on the 14th day of the dark fortnight in the month of Phalgun please him the most. Therefore, year by year, the day is observed as Mahashivratri, and devotees observe the fast, sing songs and *bhajans* and offer prayers to the Almighty to seek his blessings.

To this end jujube fruits, stalks of Bilwa leaves, coconuts, flowers and garlands are offered to the Shiva *lingam* by the devotees at the shrine. At home, they may perform the Mahashivratri *Puja* by taking a holy bath (in warm water) early in the morning, wearing new clothes and then smearing *bhasm* (holy ash) on their forehead.

Mahashivaratri is especially important for women, both married and unmarried, who perform Shiva *puja* and observe the fast with great devotion and sincerity. This is predominantly done to appease Shiva along with his consort, the goddess Parvati, who is often called *Ma Gauri*. It is believed that *Ma Gauri* bestows marital bliss on women yet to be married and blesses the married with a healthy and blissful married life. Young girls observe the fast and worship Shiva so that he may bless them with good husbands. They sing devotional songs in praise of the lord, and holy texts are chanted throughout the night. The festival also celebrates the wedding of Shiva and Sati, the divine mother.

It is believed that devotion to Shiva on Mahashivaratri will free devotees from their past sins and those who pledge themselves to him on this occasion will be liberated from the cycle of birth and death and so attain *moksha* or salvation. The devotees of Shiva therefore flock to the temples on this day to offer their prayers.

a) pp 116-117; b) pp 65-66, 75.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism - Mahashivratri](#)
2. [I Love India - Mahashivratri](#)
3. [BBC Religions - Hinduism: Mahashivratri](#)
4. [Images of Mahashivratri](#)
5. [Times of India - Mahashivratri](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 5 March 2019

SHROVE TUESDAY (Pancake Day) Christian (Western Churches)

Commonly known as Pancake Day, this is the day before the start of Lent. Traditionally it is a day for repentance and absolution in preparation for Lent ('shrive' means to receive or make confession). Pancakes were originally made to use up all the rich foods, such as butter and eggs, before Lent. In some parts of the world people celebrate Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) by holding carnivals.

a) p 86; b) pp 51, 141.

More information at ...

1. [Topmarks: Shrove Tuesday](#)
2. [Time Out: Pancake Day in London](#)
3. [Project Britain - Shrove Tuesday](#)
4. [BBC Good Food - Pancake Day Recipes](#)
5. [Shrove Tuesday - a day for being shriven](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 6 March 2019

ASH WEDNESDAY *Christian (Western Churches)*

The first day of Lent when Christians remember the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness and the temptations he faced during this time. In Catholic and some Anglican churches, services are held where the worshipper's forehead is marked with a cross of ash, which has been made from burning the palm crosses of the previous year – hence the name Ash Wednesday.

Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13

a) p 87; b) pp 49, 51, 141, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Bible Info - What is Ash Wednesday?](#)
2. [Catholic Encyclopaedia - Ash Wednesday](#)
3. [BBC Religions: Ash Wednesday](#)
4. [Ash Wednesday in pictures](#)
5. [Ash Wednesday in the Orthodox Church](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 6 March, 2019 – Saturday, 20 April, 2019

LENT Christian (Western Churches)

Lent is a period of forty days (not counting Sundays) that leads up to Easter. It is a time of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial and spiritual discipline in preparation for Easter. The purpose is to set aside time for reflection on the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus, his life, death, burial, and resurrection. Traditionally Christians give up something during this time - a habit, such as smoking, watching TV, or swearing, or a food or drink, such as sweets, chocolate or coffee - to mark the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness, which end on Easter day. Many still do this, but the emphasis is now more on following a simpler lifestyle throughout the year. Those who give up something save the cost of these items for Church funds or a charity. For many Christians it is a time for study groups, and Bible reading.

In Western Christianity, Ash Wednesday marks the first day, or the start of the season of Lent, which begins 40 days prior to Easter (Technically 46, as Sundays are not included in the count). The exact date changes every year because Easter and its surrounding holidays are movable feasts.

The significance of the 40-day period of Lent is based on two episodes of spiritual testing in the Bible: the 40 years of wilderness wandering by the Israelites, and the Temptation of Jesus after he spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness.

In Orthodox churches, the spiritual preparations for Pascha (Easter) begin with Great Lent, a 40-day period of self-examination and fasting (including Sundays), which starts on Clean Monday (seven weeks before Easter Sunday) and culminates on Lazarus Saturday (eight days before Easter Sunday) which signifies the end of Great Lent. Fasting continues however during the Holy Week of Orthodox Easter. Ash Wednesday is not observed.

The Bible does not mention the custom of Lent, although, the practice of repentance and mourning in ashes is a Biblical one, found in 2 Samuel 13:19; Esther 4:1; Job 2:8; Daniel 9:3; and Matthew 11:21. Likewise, the word 'Easter' does not appear in the Bible and no early church celebrations of the resurrection of Jesus are mentioned in the new Testament. Easter, like Christmas, is a tradition that developed later in Church history.

Many Christians who observe Lent celebrate Shrove Tuesday, also called Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras, (French for Fat Tuesday), the day before Lent starts. Traditionally, pancakes are eaten to use up rich foods like eggs and dairy in anticipation of the 40-day fasting season of Lent. The name Shrove comes from the old English word 'shrive' which means to confess. On Shrove Tuesday, in the Middle Ages, people used to confess their sins so that they would receive forgiveness before the season of Lent began.

Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22.

a) pp 86-87; b) pp 11, 13, 48-49, 51, 135, 141, 143.

More information at ...

- [1. About Christianity: Lent](#)
- [2. Franciscan Questions about Lent](#)
- [3. Project Britain - When and What is Lent?](#)
- [4. Prayers for five weeks of Lent](#)
- [5. A Labyrinth for Lent](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 11 March 2019

FIRST DAY OF LENT / THE GREAT LENTEN FAST *Christian (Orthodox)*

This is the beginning of the Lenten Fast, which involves abstinence from meat, fish and dairy products until Easter.

Unlike the Western tradition, where Lent begins on the *Wednesday* before the first Sunday of Lent, Eastern Churches start Lent on the *Monday* before the first Sunday. In addition, since Lent is calculated in relation to Easter, it follows that when the Orthodox date for Easter differs from that of the Western Churches, the whole Lenten period will similarly differ.

a) p 80; b) pp 48, 51.

More information at ...

1. [The Fasting Rule of the Orthodox Church](#)
2. [Antiochian - Fasting: Great Lent](#)
3. [The Sundays of Great Lent](#)
4. [Blog: Great Lent Gourmet](#)
5. [About Greek Food - Great Lent Food and Traditions](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 11 March 2019 – Wednesday, 20 March 2019 (Iranian Zoroastrian)

Monday, 8 July 2019 – Wednesday 17th July 2019 (Kadmi)

Wednesday, 7th August 2019 – Friday, 16th August 2019 (Shahenshai)

FRAVARDIGAN / MUKTAD Zoroastrian

The Fravardigan festival (the festival of the *fravashis*), popularly known as *Muktad* (All Souls), commences ten days before NoRuz and is the last festival of the old year. The Zoroastrian day commences at sunrise and not midnight, and so during sunrise on the first day of the festival the immortal souls, together with their *fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors, artistically depicted as half man/half bird), are welcomed by name by the Zoroastrian *Mobeds* or *Magi* (priests).

For ten days they reside in the place of worship, hovering around a table full of metal vases, each specifically earmarked for an individual family and containing white flowers. They leave the physical world after the last ceremony, held on the tenth evening, but before the dawn of NoRuz. The designated priest - as a farewell gesture - will then empty the water from one of the metal vases, which he will also turn upside down, signifying that it is time for the immortal souls and the *fravashis* to return to the spiritual world.

Theologically Fravardigan is the most important Zoroastrian festival after NoRuz, and, since it deals with one's departed ancestors, many Zoroastrians regard it to be their holiest festival. This linking of the past with the present and the future is typical of much of Zoroastrian life.

During these ten days Zoroastrians often take time off from work, pray extensively, recite the five *Gathas* (hymns composed by Zarathushtra) and ensure their houses are thoroughly cleaned. They prepare daily samples of sacred food enjoyed by their departed ancestors while still alive, and take these to the place of worship, to be tasted by them during the daily ceremonies. This ritually consecrated food, along with chosen fruits, is then shared by the living in the special *Hamaspathmaidem Gahambar*, a communal feast celebrated after the ceremony is over.

a) pp 250-252; b) pp 129-130, 144.

More information at ...

1. [The nature and meaning of Muktad](#)
2. [Muktad](#)
3. [Zoroastrian Heritage Institute - Pateti](#)
4. [Images for Fravardigan](#)
5. [What to do and pray during the Muktad](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 17 March, 2019

ST PATRICK'S DAY *National*

This is a day celebrated in honour of the patron saint of Ireland, who lived in Britain in the 4th century CE. After his escape from being held hostage in Ireland, he became a priest and returned there to evangelise. His symbol is the shamrock, sprigs of which are worn on this day. Parades are held in Dublin and elsewhere, often of a secular nature.

a) p 260; b) p 135.

More information at ...

1. [History and fun-facts for St Patrick's Day](#)
2. [Who is St Patrick?](#)
3. [BBC Religions - Christianity: Saint Patrick](#)
4. [St Patrick's Day - Traditional set dance](#)
5. [Welcome to the Quote Garden - Quotations for Saint Patrick's Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 18 March, 2019 – Sunday, 24 March, 2019

HIGAN *Japanese*

Wednesday, 20 March, 2019

SHUNBUN NO HI *Japanese*

This is the day of the Spring equinox. As at the autumn equinox, harmony and balance are the themes, *sutras* are recited, and the graves of relatives are visited.

a) p 159; b) p 84.

More information at ...

[1. Vernal Equinox Day - Shunbun no Hi](#)

[2. Alien Times - Shunbun No Hi](#)

[3. Kids Web in Japan - Vernal Equinox Day and Higan](#)

[4. Shunbun No Hi in Pictures](#)

[5. The Nihon Sun: Celebrating Shunbun no hi in Japan](#)

Tuesday, 19 March 2019

ST JOSEPH'S DAY, HUSBAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *Christian*

In some churches a feast day is held in honour of Joseph, who, together with Mary, was responsible for Jesus' upbringing.

a) p 99; b) p 49.

More information at ...

1. [Fisheaters: Feast of St. Joseph](#)
2. [St Joseph's Table - An Age-Old Tradition](#)
3. [St Joseph's Medals](#)
4. [Images of St Joseph's Prayer](#)
5. [St Joseph's Day Altars](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 20 March, 2019

SPRING EQUINOX (Ostara) Pagan

VERNAL EQUINOX (Alban Eiler or Alban Eilir) Druid

Now night and day stand equal. The Sun grows in power and the land begins to bloom. By the Spring Equinox, the powers of the gathering year are equal to the darkness of winter and death. The God (the Green Man) awakens during this season. Some dedicate this time to Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of fertility.

More information at ...

1. [Pagan Wiccan: Spring Equinox Celebrations Around the World](#)
2. [The March Equinox](#)
3. [The Spring Equinox](#)
4. [Spring is in the air - and so are these lively festivals](#)
5. [School of the Seasons - Celebrating Spring Equinox](#)

Thursday, 21 March, 2019

NAW-RUZ *Baha'i*

Naw-Ruz is the Baha'i New Year's Day and coincides with the spring equinox. It is an ancient Persian festival celebrating the 'New Day' and it marks the end of the annual nineteen day fast that concludes the old year. Celebrations start at sunset on the day before the festival, often with gatherings for prayer, followed by a festive meal. For this the table is decorated with fruit, cakes, coloured eggs and other treats, as well as symbolic objects such as a holy book and a mirror.

Among the best known customs of Naw-Ruz is the haft-sin -- the 'seven S's'. These are seven objects beginning - in Persian - with the letter 'S', namely hyacinths, apples, lilies, silver coins, garlic, vinegar and rue, all decoratively arranged on a table. A great deal of time is spent exchanging visits with friends and relations. The celebrations end on the thirteenth day of Naw-Ruz with a picnic in the country. Lentils that have sprouted are thrown into running water, carrying away the bad luck of the previous year.

Naw-Ruz is observed wherever Iranian culture has penetrated, notably among the Zoroastrians of India and in the emigré Iranian communities around the world. It is one of only two festivals mentioned by Zoroaster in the Avesta, the holy Zoroastrian scriptures written by Zoroaster himself. It is celebrated as a holy day by these two religions: Zoroastrianism and the Baha'i Faith.

This is one of the nine Baha'i holy days on which work should be suspended, and is generally observed with a gathering for prayer and celebration - often combined with a dinner, since the sunset on which Naw-Ruz begins ends the last day of the Baha'i fast. As with all Baha'i holy days, there are few fixed rules for observing Naw-Ruz, although Iranian Baha'is often follow Iranian traditions. Many Baha'is use Naw-Ruz as a day when gifts are given.

At its most basic, Naw-Ruz is a celebration of renewal and the coming of spring, as is common for festivals at this time of year. Some believe that their actions on Naw-Ruz will affect their lives throughout the rest of the coming year. Baha'is see it (and the fast that precedes it) as a time of renewal, meant to focus believers on their spiritual development. It is also a time for physical 'spring cleaning', clearing the home of old and unneeded items to make room for items that are new.

a) 26; b) pp 19-21.

More information at ...

1. [Baha'i Library: Naw-Ruz: The Baha'i New Year](#)
2. [Naw-Ruz - The Baha'i and Zoroastrian New Year](#)
3. [Baha'i - Naw-Ruz](#)
4. [Baha'i Prayers: Naw-Ruz](#)
5. [Naw Ruz - Spiritual Springtime](#)

Thursday, 21 March 2019

JAMSHEDI NORUZ *Zoroastrian (Iranian)*

The Zoroastrian NoRuz (New Year's Day) is celebrated on the the first day of spring, and is the most important festival in the Zoroastrian year. Tradition claims it was founded by Prophet Zarathushtra himself, when, it is believed, the prophet received his first revelation from the Creator God, Ahura Mazda. It is popularly known as Jamsheedi NoRuz, since the pre-Zoroastrian King Jamsheed assisted the Creator God, Ahura Mazda, by building an underground dwelling (similar to Noah's Ark). This saved the creation from being utterly destroyed during the prolonged, bitter, snowy winter brought about by the evil spirit (Angra Mainyu).

NoRuz represents the resurgence of life and the symbolic victory of the forces of light over darkness. Prior to NoRuz the family spring cleans the whole house, and preparations are made to grow green herbs and paint boiled eggs for the *haftsheen* table, which contains items associated with the seven attributes of Ahura Mazda – these are known as the *Amesha Spentas*. It is customary to wear new clothes and offer gifts, visit the Fire Temple to seek blessing from Ahura Mazda, and participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, followed by eating, drinking, dancing and making merry.

No Ruz is deeply embedded in Iranian culture, and is still celebrated as the New Year in Islamic Iran, although without any religious connotations.

a) pp 248-250, 252, 255; b) pp 130-132, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Norouz - Mary Boyce - The Holiest and Most Joyous Festival of the Iranian Year](#)
2. [Crystal Links: Noruz](#)
3. [Mythic Maps: Jamshedi Noruz](#)
4. [Nauruz Photos and Images](#)
5. [Nowruz Festival 2017](#)

Thursday, 21 March, 2019

PURIM – FESTIVAL OF LOTS Jewish

Purim is a carnival festival which recalls how the Jewish community of Persia was saved from being massacred through the actions of a young Jewish woman, as is retold in the Book of Esther. The whole book, in the form of a handwritten scroll, the *Megillah*, is read twice in the synagogue, once on the evening of Purim and then again on the following day. Colourful costumes and masks are often worn amid lots of noise as the name of Haman (the villain of the story) is drowned out by the congregation with rattles and hooters and boos when it is read out. Many people come for the reading of the *Megillah* in fancy dress. *Hamantashen* (triangular cakes filled with poppy seeds, or with jam or chocolate) are baked and eaten at this time, so named after the triangular pockets or hats or ears said to be in courtly fashion at the time.

Purim means *Lots* and stems from Haman's use of lots to determine the date of the pogrom he was planning of all Jews throughout the Persian empire. Since Mordechai, the leader of the Jewish community in Sushan, the capital city, had refused to bow down to Haman, who was the Prime Minister of Ahasuerus, the Persian King, Haman vowed 'to destroy, kill and annihilate all Jews, young and old, infant and women, in a single day.'

King Ahasuerus had sought a new wife to replace his previous wife, Vashti, whom he had rejected for disobedience. His new Queen, Esther, who was Jewish and Mordechai's cousin, prayed and fasted along with her fellow Jews for three days, and then risked her life by visiting the King unbidden to invite him to a party where she appealed for the life of her fellow Jews. The King listened to her and Haman was found guilty and hanged on a gallows he had previously erected for Mordechai. Mordechai, who had earlier exposed a plot to assassinate the King, now became the king's new Prime Minister.

The book of Esther is read aloud in its fullness in the evening of one day and the daytime of the next, in what has become the most joyous day in the Jewish calendar. It celebrates divine deliverance from oppression and marked a new sense of purpose for the Israelite community, who from that time became known as 'Jews'.

On this day, which always follows a fast throughout the previous day in memory of Esther's three days of fasting, Jews are expected to observe four commands or *mitzvots*: to listen to the reading of the *Megillah*; to give money to at least two poor people in the community, so as to stress the unity of all Jewish people; to send gifts of at least two kinds of food and drink to at least one friend; and to share in a festive meal where food and drink are taken 'until each person present cannot distinguish between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai'.

a) pp 199-201; b) pp 90, 103-104, 108-109, 139, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Jewish Virtual Library - Purim](#)
2. [My Jewish Learning - Purim](#)
3. [Virtual Jerusalem: Purim](#)
4. [Purim colouring pages for Tots](#)
5. [Aish - Purim](#)

Thursday, 21 March 2019

HOLI Hindu

A spring festival lasting one to five days. Bonfires are lit and revellers throw coloured powders and dyes over each other. Various stories and customs are associated with the festival: the throwing of coloured dyes is linked with Krishna and his antics with Radha and the gopis (milkmaids); another story associated with Holi is that of Prahlada and Holika: Prahlada worshipped Vishnu in defiance of his father, King Hiranyakashipu's wishes. Prahlada survived when his aunt, Holika, who was supposedly immune to fire, held him while, as instructed by the king, she sat on a bonfire intended to kill him.

During Holi, practices, which at other times could be offensive, are allowed. Squirting coloured water on passers-by, dunking friends in mud pool amidst teasing and laughter, getting intoxicated on bhaang and revelling with companions is perfectly acceptable. In fact, on the days of Holi, you can get away with almost anything by saying, "Don't mind, it's Holi!"

Women, especially, enjoy the freedom of relaxed rules and sometimes join in the merriment rather aggressively. There is also much vulgar behaviour, often connected with phallic themes. It is a time when pollution is not important, a time for license and obscenity in place of the usual societal and caste restrictions.

It is said the spirit of Holi encourages the feeling of brotherhood in society and even enemies turn friends on this day. People of all communities and even differing religions participate in this joyous and colourful festival and in doing so strengthen the secular fabric of the nation.

Mythology of this nature, when re-enacted by the crowds of excited Hindus today, is essentially an act of praise and devotion, and particularly so for those who seek to honour Vishnu, seen as the Lord and Preserver of all life.

a) pp 118-119; b) pp 14, 66-67, 69, 75, 135, 138.

More information at ...

1. [The Festival of Holi](#)
2. [Hinduism - Holi - Festival of Colours](#)
3. [Colours of India - Holi](#)
4. [Colourful Holi](#)
5. [Holi Celebration in Mathura - All you need to know](#)

Thursday, 21 March 2019 / Friday, 22 March 2019

HOLA MAHALLA/HOLA MOHALLA Sikh

In 1701 Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, introduced this festival at Anandpur in Punjab, India, as an alternative to the Hindu festival of Holi. It included competitive displays of swordsmanship, horsemanship, archery and wrestling, together with displays of weapons and symposia of poetry. It was a colourful occasion, particularly for young Sikhs, and was observed on the day after the Hindu festival of Holi.

It is still celebrated each March in its original format over three days at the Anandpur Sahib Gurdwara. It is nowadays a martial fair, designed by Guru Gobind Singh, to strengthen the Sikh community by carrying out military style training and mock-drills, which are accompanied by religious discussions.

In many countries of the world, wherever Sikh communities are found, Hola Mohalla (or Mahalla, or just Hola) has become an annual festival, also celebrated each March. In the tradition established by Guru Gobind Singh, it follows the Hindu festival of Holi by one day, although sometimes it is celebrated on the same day as Holi. Hola is the masculine form of the feminine sounding name Holi.

The festivities of Hola Mohalla begin by visiting local gurdwaras for early morning prayers. Official gatherings take place where portions of the Guru Granth Sahib are read. Spiritual songs and religious lectures mark the occasion and after the religious ceremonies are over, *prasad* is distributed among the people.

When the procession sets off, the *Panj Pyares* walk in front, making visits by arrangement to all the major gurdwaras in the area. Hola Mohalla has become the ideal time to celebrate and also to dedicate oneself to community service, and, as in the Punjab, *langars* are organised, with local people coming forward to help by providing the raw materials for the cooking the meal, washing the dishes and cleaning the gurdwaras.

In the evening a marked degree of anticipation and excitement takes over, as martial members of the Sikh community (*Nihang* Sikhs) display their physical strength through daring acts like mock-battles (*gatkas*), sword-fighting displays, archery, wrestling and exercising on speeding horses. They also splatter coloured powders and liquids on the audience. This is followed by cultural activities including music, dance and poetry programmes and competitions.

The word 'Mohalla' is derived from the Arabic root *hal* (alighting or descending) and is a Punjabi word that implies an organized procession in the form of an army column. This is accompanied by war-drums and standard-bearers, and proceeds to a chosen spot or moves in state from one gurdwara to another. But unlike Holi, when Hindus playfully sprinkle coloured powder, dry or mixed in water, on each other, the Guru made Hola Mohalla an occasion for the Sikhs to demonstrate their martial skills in simulated battles. Although Sikhism today is a peace loving tradition, it is its pride in the events of its past that has led the Indian government recently to accord the celebration the status of a national festival.

a) pp 236, 239-240, 244; b) p 126

More information at ...

1. [All about Sikhs - Sikh Festivals - Hola Mohalla](#)
2. [The festival of Holi/Hola Mohalla](#)
3. [Hola Mohalla](#)
4. [Images for Hola Mohalla](#)
5. [Sikhiwiki: Hola Mohalla](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

*** Tuesday, February 19 2019 or Thursday, March 21 2019**

MAGHA PUJA Buddhist

This festival commemorates two occasions, one that took place in the month of Magha, seven weeks after the Buddha's enlightenment. Five of his companions from his years of austerity had joined him and he taught them the Four Noble Truths; the other occasion was 45 years later, when 1,250 enlightened personal disciples of the Buddha came spontaneously to the Bamboo Grove at Rajagaha on the full moon of Magha (usually in late February or early March). This was one of the earliest large gatherings of Buddhists. On that day the Buddha taught the main principles of the Dhamma and set out his teachings to the assembled arahats (enlightened monks) for them to learn and follow.

On this later Magha Puja Day, the Buddha spoke to his disciple Ananda and told him that he was near the end of his life and had chosen to die in three months time. He also outlined a summary of his teachings and a code of discipline (which monks are expected to recite every fortnight). Magha Puja Day thus brackets the Buddha's teaching life, providing a reason as to why it is one of the most important Buddhist festivals. The day is normally observed with several hours of meditation, chanting and listening to sermons.

All 1250 of these monks were direct disciples of the Buddha, having been ordained by him at various stages of his life. As a result of this gathering of disciples, the full moon of Magha has also come to be known as 'Sangha day' and is a time when monks gather together to share their knowledge and experiences. In the West it falls towards the end of winter when many of the monasteries have just finished a long retreat, and such a gathering is a joyous time. Many will not have seen each other for some months, and with the arising of spring and the end of a long retreat there is much for them to share.

The day involves reflection on what it means to be part of the sangha - this including the fourfold sangha: lay men and women, monks and nuns; but because of the origin of the event it tends not to be so significant for lay people. For the ordained community who have come together there may be a series of meetings to discuss various aspects of the community's teachings, periods of group meditation, talks given by senior members of the community (both resident and visiting) and a variety of other events - often quite spontaneous - over a period of several days.

In Thailand, by contrast, it is very much a holiday time. At every Buddhist temple, Buddhists gather after dark. They bring flowers, incense, & candles. When these are lit, the worshippers circle the temple's main hall three times, once for each of the Three Jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Sangha, and the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha).

a) p 53 b) p 34.

More information at ...

1. [Buddhamind: Festivals - Magha Puja](#)
2. [The Day of Four Marvellous Events](#)
3. [Dhammakaya - Magha Puja Day](#)
4. [Images of Magha Puja Day](#)
5. [Celebrating Magha Puja](#)

Sunday, 24 March 2019

AVA MAH PARAB (ABAN JASHAN) *Zoroastrian (Shenshai - Parsi)*

Ava is short for the divinity Aredvi Sura Anahita, the guardian protector of the waters, who is associated with fertility. On the day of Ava, the 10th day of the month of Ava, the 8th month, Zoroastrians celebrate the birthday of the waters by going to the seas, rivers and streams and reciting the *Aredvi Sura Niyayeesh* or 'Litany to the Waters'. They offer thanks to the great purifier who nourishes the world and offer to the waters flowers, sugar, coconuts and specially prepared flat cakes made with sweet lentils.

a) pp 254-255; b) p 131.

More information at ...

1. [Frashogard: Ava Mah Parab - The Wondrous Power of Water](#)
2. [Food and Drink Customs during Ava Mah Parab](#)
3. [The Relevance and Significance of the month of Avan](#)
4. [Images for Ava Mah Parab](#)
5. [Wikipedia - Aban Jashan](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 25 March 2019

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD / LADY DAY *Christian (Anglican and Orthodox)*

Lady Day celebrates the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to bear a child, and Mary's response in the Magnificat. The day provides an opportunity to focus on the doctrine of the incarnation. Luke 1:26-38, 46-55.

a) pp 96-97; b) pp 48-49, 55, 59.

More information at ...

1. [Catholic Culture: Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord](#)
2. [BBC: The Annunciation](#)
3. [The Annunciation - Luke 1: 26-38](#)
4. [Leonardo da Vinci - The Annunciation](#)
5. [American Catholic: Annunciation of the Lord](#)

Monday, 25 March 2019

LADY DAY *National*

One of the four Quarter Days in the UK legal calendar

Tuesday, 26 March 2019 *Zoroastrian (Iranian)*

Tuesday, 23 July 2019 *Zoroastrian (Kadmi)*

KHORDAD SAL *Zoroastrian*

Khordad Sal is the Birthday of Zarathushtra and falls on the sixth day following NoRuz. *Khordad* means perfection and the festival of Khordad Sal symbolically celebrates the birthday of Prophet Zarathushtra. It is customary on this day to visit the Fire Temple, to give thanks to Ahura Mazda for giving humanity the Prophet Zarathushtra, to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, to listen to stories of the miraculous birth and life of Prophet Zarathushtra, and to share in a happy community meal, a drink and a dance.

a) pp 253, 255; b) pp 128-132.

More information at ...

1. [Observe the Greater Noruz on Khordad Sal](#)
2. [A History of Khordad Sal](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Khordad Sal](#)
4. [Sakshigopal: Happy Khordad Sal! Birthday Day of Zoroaster!](#)
5. [Khordad Sal celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Lord Zoroaster](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 31 March 2019

MOTHERING SUNDAY (Simnel Sunday) *Christian*

Mid-Lent Sunday, the 4th Sunday in Lent, has now become secularised and is more popularly known as Mother's Day. It was, traditionally, a Sunday when Christians revisited their 'mother church' and took gifts to their mothers, which often included a *simnel* cake.

a) p 26; b) p 136.

More information at ...

1. [Anglican History: Mothering Sunday](#)
2. [Time and Date: Mothering Sunday](#)
3. [Project Britain - Mothering Sunday](#)
4. [Mothers Day Greeting Cards](#)
5. [Mothers Day Gifts](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

APRIL 2019

Margaret Fell

Here is the fourth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Margaret Fell/Fox died in April 1702 at the age of 88. Based for much of her life at Swarthmore Hall, Ulverston, in NW England, she was both an accomplished estate manager and an ardent searcher for what is true and fair in life. She is best known as one of the founder figures in the movement of Quakers/Friends, and subsequent wife of George Fox. She lived as she wrote with her heart on her sleeve, travelling to petition Charles II in London, and was gaoled successively in Lancaster Castle for her refusal to conform on matters of principle. Instead she trusted in the light of reason, which she believed is there in each and every man and woman, as conscience and doorway to God, throughout all humanity.

<http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/14/Margaret-Fell>

http://www.gwyneddmeeting.org/history/margaret_fell.html

http://www.ushistory.org/penn/margaret_fell.htm

<http://westrichmondfriends.org/Fell.htm>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYV6QK9dLyE>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/quakers/0/steps/19176>

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/163>

<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1898&context=qrt>

Wednesday, 3 April 2019

ISRA AND MI'RAJ / THE PROPHET'S NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENT INTO HEAVEN / LAILAT (LAYLAT) UL ISRA WA-L-MIRAJ (27th Rajab) Muslim

This festival celebrates the journey of the Prophet Muhammad, in the tenth year of his prophethood, from Makkah to Jerusalem, and through the heavens to the presence of God, all in one night. Muslims believe that on the preceding night the Prophet received the command that they should pray five times each day. The rock in Jerusalem from which the Prophet ascended is now contained in the Dome of the Rock. Muslims mark this night by reading the *Qur'an* and saying additional prayers. The following day is accordingly a day for recuperation rather than one for physical activity.

Suras 2:144 and 17:1 refer. The full story is in the *Hadith*, along with the times of prayer.

a) p 231; b) pp 119-120.

More information at ...

1. [Sunna Lessons: The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension](#)
2. [Essaouira: Lailat al Miraj](#)
3. [Message of the Aqalayn: The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascent to Heaven](#)
4. [The Night Journey in pictures - the Prophet Muhammad's Meeting with Allah](#)
5. [Message of the Aqalayn: The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascent to Heaven](#)

Friday, 5 April 2019

FESTIVAL OF PURE BRIGHTNESS / TOMB SWEEPING DAY / QINGMINGJIE / CH'ING MING Chinese

This is the first occasion in the year when Chinese visit their family tombs. After sweeping the tombstones, people offer food, flowers and paper replicas of favourite items dear to the dead, such as a telephone, a car or a house; they then burn incense and paper money and bow before the memorial tablets. In Chinese culture, even though a person has died, he/she may still have need of these. This practice reflects a form of belief and care for their deceased family members, who still survive in some way in the after life.

Families make a special effort to come together and to return to the family graveyard on this occasion. Many people picnic by the grave to 'join' the ancestors in the feast. No food is cooked on this day and only cold meals are served. There should always be an even number of dishes put in front of the grave, along with a bowl of rice with an upright incense stick. Then family members start taking turns to bow before the tombs of the ancestors, starting with the most senior members of the family.

The festival is also one of the 24 seasonal division points in China, and falls on April 4-6 each year. In contrast to the solemnity of the tomb sweepers, people also enjoy the hope of Spring, since the Qingming Festival is a time when the sun shines brightly, the trees and grass become green and nature is lively once more. It is the high time for spring ploughing and sowing. Since ancient times, people have followed the custom of Spring outings.

People love to fly extravagant kites during the 'Festival of Pure Brightness. Many people fly kites not only during the day, but also - and especially - at night. A string of little lanterns tied onto the kite or its tail look like shining stars, and therefore are called 'god's lanterns'.

Respect for the dead and also for the elderly has long been a feature of Chinese practice, belief and culture. This annual family meeting at the tombs is a time of solemnity but not sadness, and enshrines a message of hope for a brighter future ahead.

a) pp 68-69; b) pp 39, 42, 44.

More information at ...

1. [China - Festivals - Pure Brightness](#)
2. [China Travel - Pure Brightness Festival](#)
3. [Qingming Festival \(Tomb-sweeping Day\)](#)
4. [Tomb Sweeping Day in Pictures](#)
5. [Chinese Culture: Tomb Sweeping Festival](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 8 April, 2019

HANAMATSURI *Buddhist (Japanese)*

This flower festival marks the Japanese celebration of the Buddha Shakyamuni's birthday, which Mahayana Buddhists fix at 565 BCE. The flowers accentuate the tradition that the Buddha was born in a garden, so floral shrines are made and an image of the infant Buddha is set in it and bathed.

The original Japanese Flower Festival (*hana*, 'flower', *matsuri*, 'festival') was observed to encourage fruit trees to flower early; at the time, the farming community believed that the longer the blossoming, the more prosperous the harvest. Buddhism spread to Japan in the 6th century CE, and sometime around 600 CE the *hanamatsuri* festival became incorporated into the celebration of the Buddha's birthday.

Nowadays a special altar—the *hanamido*—is erected and decorated with flowers representing the garden in Lumbini, southern Nepal, where it is said that Queen Maya went into labour. An image of the infant Buddha is placed in a pan and, in a ritual known as *kanbutsu*, water or sweet tea is poured over it in remembrance of the "sweet rain" that descended from heaven at the moment of the birth.

It is told that when Buddha Shakyamuni was born, birds sang and flowers bloomed in honour of his arrival. Pointing with his right hand to heaven and with his left hand to earth, the new born child took seven steps, prophesying that he would become a great sage and deliver humanity from suffering.

Hanamatsuri is predominately a Mahayana festival whereas Theravadin Buddhists observe the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and entrance into nirvana during the festival of *Wesak*, held in May at the time of the full moon.

While Buddhists of all traditions find meaning in these miracle stories of the events of his birth, they are also careful to point to his specific role as a wise teacher whose role was to signpost the way for all Buddhist people to enlightenment and so to nirvana.

a) p159; b) pp 82, 84, 89.

More information at ...

1. [Hanamatsuri - Buddha's Birthday](#)
2. [Journal of Shin Buddhism: Hanamatsuri](#)
3. [Mythic Maps: Hanamatsuri](#)
4. [Photos and text for Hanamatsuri](#)
5. [Vatican Greetings to Buddhists for the Feast of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri/2013](#)

Saturday, 13 April – Monday, April 15

SONGKRAN *Buddhist*

This is the traditional New Year's Day festival in Thailand, where containers of water are thrown over those standing nearby as a symbol of washing away all that is evil. Fragrant herbs are often placed in the jug or bucket containing the water. The name Songkran comes from a Sanskrit word meaning 'passing' or 'approaching'. The most common greeting is 'Sawasdee Pee Mai!', 'A happy new year' in Thai. Also spoken is, 'Suk san wan Songkran' (pronounced: *suke sahn wahn song kran*) which means 'Happy Songkran day'.

This Thai water festival in Bangkok officially runs for three days, starting on the morning of April 13th and finishing on April 15th. Although officially only three days long, many people take time off from work and stretch the festival into a six day celebration. April is the hottest month of the year, and the entire country enjoys its friendly water fights and street parties that can last nearly a week.

The real significance of the splashing with water relates to physical cleanliness, spiritual purification, and making a fresh start to daily life. Houses are cleaned and Buddha statues are carried through the streets to be rinsed with flower-scented water, so symbolically washing off all the misfortunes of the past year, and in so doing welcoming in the new year when a fresh start can be made.

Making merit is an essential part of Songkran, and visiting nine sacred temples during Songkran is considered one of the ultimate merit accumulators. Other merit-making customs in Bangkok include going to the temples to build sand stupas, which are then decorated with colourful flags and flowers. These can be seen around key temples in the Rattanakosin area.

Songkran is the occasion for family re-unions and temple visits. Many Thais observe the holidays by spending time with families and friends, and they may politely pour a bowl of water on members of the family, and as well on their close friends and neighbours. Traditional Thais perform the *Rod Nam Dum Hua* ritual on the first day of Songkran, which is officially the National Elderly Day. During the ritual, young people pour fragrant water into the elders' palms as a gesture of humility and ask for their blessings. Known as 'Songkran Day', this first day of the festival is an exuberant celebration with processions of Buddha images taking place throughout the country. Thai people prepare themselves for the beginning of the New Year, as for other festivals, by thorough cleaning of their houses. April 13th is also when the water throwing really commences.

The second day of Songkran is officially the National Family Day. Families wake up early and give alms to the monks; then ideally the rest of the day is spent sharing quality family time together. An important religious ritual on Songkran is 'Bathing the Buddha image', in which devout Buddhists pour fragrant water over Buddha statues, both at the temple and at home. More religious Thais engage in Buddhist ceremonies and merit-making activities throughout the holidays.

Others may enjoy a series of cultural activities, such as the Thai-Raman flag ceremony, a 'saba' game, Raman dances, boat races, floral floats parade, and many more. As well as sprinkling or throwing water, a few local people may practise smearing white powder or paste on the heads of others. The paste is usually brushed gently on the forehead and symbolically wards off bad luck.

Another Songkran ritual is to tie strings to people's wrists. If a friend or neighbour approaches with a string held by its ends, the custom is to extend the wrist with the palm facing the sky. The friend will then tie on a new bracelet (usually thin, plain strings) and say a short blessing. The tradition is to leave the strings on until they break or fall off on their own.

More information at ...

1. [What is Songkran?](#)
2. [Things to know about the Thailand Water Festival - Songkran](#)
3. [Everything you need to know about Songkran in Thailand](#)
4. [Seventeen photographs of Songkran in Thailand](#)
5. [Songkran - National Holiday in Thailand](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 14 April 2019

VAISAKHI / BAISAKHI – The Sikh New Year Festival *Sikh*

In 1699 CE, on Vaisakhi, the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the Order of the Khalsa. Five men, who later came to be known as the *Panj Piare* (Five Beloved Ones), were prepared to offer their lives when the Guru asked for volunteers. According to tradition this is when he initiated both these Panj Piare and many others into the Khalsa, with men taking the name 'Singh' and women taking the name 'Kaur'. On this day Sikhs, both young and more mature, are nowadays initiated into the *Khalsa* by 'taking *amrit*'; in doing so they commit themselves to a discipline that includes daily prayers and the wearing of the external markers of *Khalsa* identity (the Five Ks). Outside each gurdwara the *Nishan Sahib* (the Sikh pennant) and its flagpole are taken down, ceremonially bathed and then re-erected.

The formation of the *Khalsa*, the community of committed Sikhs, was the first step to prepare the Sikh people for the day when there would be no further human Gurus. Instead, after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, as they sought for further guidance and following the Guru's clear instructions, they came to look for authority in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the compilation of the writings of the earlier Gurus, and also in the tenth Guru's writings in the *Dasam Granth*.

a) pp 236-237; b) pp 63, 67, 75, 121-122, 124-126, 140, 143, viii.

More information at ...

1. [The Holiday Spot: Baisakhi](#)
2. [Sikhism Guide: Vaisakhi](#)
3. [Sikh Net: Vaisakhi - Birth of the Khalsa - Sikh Stories of Children](#)
4. [Baisaki Greetings and Bangra Dancing](#)
5. [The Huffington Post: Vaisakhi](#)

Sunday, April 14th 2019

RAMA NAVAMI Hindu

This is the birthday of Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu. It is one of the most important festivals for Hindus, particularly for those of the Vaishnava sect. On this auspicious day, devotees repeat the name of Rama with every breath and vow to lead a righteous life. The festival is celebrated especially at twelve noon since Rama was reputedly born at that time, and it takes the form of the ceremony of *aarti* (pronounced aar-tee). This is usually performed in front of the baby Rama (represented by a doll in a swinging cradle) or a devotional picture showing the scene of his birth.

Dedicated worshippers of Lord Rama normally observe a fast at this time, taking only milk and fruit for all nine days of the festival. Some fast only on the Rama Navami day itself. Apart from fasting, the day is marked by extremely colourful ceremonies. Temples are decorated and the image of Lord Rama is richly adorned. Devotees greet one another with 'Sri Ram' or 'Jai Ram-ji-ki', and invoke his name to grant them blessings and protection.

The epic poem 'Ramayana' is read in the temples and learned scholars narrate the thrilling episodes of the poem. Those who cannot recite the entire epic may repeat a single verse, which contains, in a nutshell, the story of the Ramayana. The two great Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, have exerted great influence on generations of believers. Rama is considered to be the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and the Ramayana tells the story of his life and his search for human values that are a model for all to follow. Rama is regarded as the perfect person, the embodiment of compassion, gentleness, kindness, righteousness and integrity. Although he had all the power in the world at his fingertips, he still remained peaceful and gentle.

Rama Navami occurs in the month of March. Celebrations begin with a prayer to the Sun early in the morning. At midday a special prayer is performed in honour of Rama. A 'havan,' or sacred fire ceremony, is also performed.

In northern India especially, an event that draws popular participation is the Rama Navami procession. The main attraction here is a gaily decorated chariot in which four persons are dressed up as Rama, his brother Laxman, his queen Sita and his disciple Hanuman. The chariot is accompanied by several other people in ancient costumes as worn by Rama's soldiers. The procession is a lively affair with the participants shouting praises, echoing the happy days of Rama's reign.

It is claimed that the repetition of his name (*Rama Nama*) is the surest, fastest and easiest way to attain purity, peace, wisdom, understanding, joy, prosperity and ultimately liberation. Rama Himself said, 'Repetition of My name once is equal to the repetition of a thousand names of God or to the repetition of a Mantra a thousand times.'

In addition to this meditation, devout followers clean their homes and put pictures of Lord Rama, Lakshman, Sita and Hanuman on a dais in preparation for the *puja*. Fruit, flowers and incense are placed before the family deities. The ceremony begins with the youngest female member of the family applying *tika* to all the male members present. A red *bindi* is also applied on the foreheads of the female members. Everyone participates in the *puja* by first sprinkling water on the gods and then showering handfuls of rice onto their heads. Then all stand up to perform the *aarti*, at the end of which *ganga* water (or plain water if that is not available) is sprinkled over the gathering. The singing of *bhajans* goes on for the entire *puja*. Finally, *prasad* is distributed among all the people who have gathered.

a) p 121; b) pp 67-68, 75.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: Ramnavami - Birthday of Lord Rama](#)
2. [Taj: Festivals - About Ram Navami](#)
3. [Mythic Maps: Ramnavami](#)
4. [Ramnavami: Greetings Cards](#)
5. [Hindupedia: Rama Navami](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 14 April 2019 – Saturday, 20 April 2019

HOLY WEEK *Christian (Western Churches)*

This is the most solemn week of the Christian year, in which Christians recall the events of the final week of the earthly life of Jesus.

a) p 87; b) pp 14, 46, 49, 51-52, 54, 141, 143.

More information at ...

1. [Belief Net: Christian Holidays during Holy Week](#)
2. [Holy week in the Catholic Encyclopedia](#)
3. [Holy Week Activities for Kids](#)
4. [Images of Holy Week - for kids](#)
5. [Christianity Today: Articles on Holy Week](#)

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Sunday, 14 April 2019

PALM SUNDAY *Christian (Western Churches) (Orthodox date: 24 April)*

Palm Sunday is the final Sunday of Lent and the first day of Holy Week, when Christians remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where, later, he would be arrested and crucified. Many churches commemorate the day by processions, with the congregation carrying symbolic palm leaves (folded in the form of a cross) or branches of palm trees.

Five days before the Passover, Jesus came from Bethany to Jerusalem. Having sent two of His disciples to bring him a colt of a donkey, he sat upon it and entered the city. The gospels record his arrival, riding into the city on a donkey, while the crowds spread their cloaks and palm branches on the street and shouted 'Hosanna to the Son of David' and 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' to honour him as their long-awaited Messiah and King.

During Palm Sunday services, palms are distributed to parishioners who carry them in a ritual procession into church. The palms are blessed and many people fashion them into small crosses or other items of personal devotion. These may be returned to the church, or kept for the year. Because the palms have been blessed, they may not be discarded as trash. In many cases they are collected at the church and incinerated to create the ashes that will be used in the following year's Ash Wednesday observance.

The celebration of Palm Sunday originated in the Jerusalem Church, around the late fourth century. The ceremony consisted of prayers, hymns, and sermons recited by the clergy while the people walked to various holy sites throughout the city. At the final site, the place where Jesus ascended into heaven, the clergy read from the gospels concerning the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. In the early evening they returned to the city reciting: 'Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.' The children carried palm and olive branches as the people returned through the city back to the church, where they would hold evening services.

By the fifth century, the Palm Sunday celebration had spread as far as Constantinople. Changes made in the sixth and seventh centuries resulted in two new Palm Sunday traditions - the ritual blessing of the palms, and a morning procession instead of an evening one. Adopted by the Western Church in the eighth century, the celebration received the name 'Dominica in Palmis,' or 'Palm Sunday'.

Today, Palm Sunday traditions in Roman Catholic churches are much the same as they have been since the tenth century. The ceremony begins with the blessing of the palms. The procession follows, then Mass is celebrated, and the Passion and the Benediction are sung. Afterwards, many people take the palms home and place them in houses, barns, and fields. The colours of the Mass on Palm Sunday are red and white, symbolizing the redemption in blood that Jesus paid for the world.

In Orthodox churches Palm Sunday is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which is preceded by the Matins service. A Great Vespers is conducted on the preceding Saturday evening, according to the order prescribed in the Triodion. On this Sunday a basket containing the woven palm crosses is placed on a table in front of the icon of the Lord. The palms are then distributed to the faithful, as a blessing upon those who hold the palms in their hands.

In the simplest of terms, Palm Sunday is an occasion for reflecting on the final week of Jesus' life. It is a time for Christians to prepare their hearts for the agony of His Passion and the joy of His Resurrection.

Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-40, John 12:12-19.

a) p 87; b) pp 49, 51, 141, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Catholic Online: Palm Sunday](#)
2. [Share Faith: Palm Sunday](#)
3. [Project Britain - Palm Sunday](#)
4. [Palm Sunday for Kids](#)
5. [Orthodox Christian Palm Sunday](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 17 April 2019

MAHAVIRA JAYANTI Jain

This is a festival celebrating the birth (in 540, 599 or 615 BCE) of Mahavira, the last Tirthankara, the greatest teacher and model for all Jainas. The events surrounding his birth are retold and re-enacted at all Jain temples. If monks or nuns are present, they will read from the scriptures and teach about the rest of Mahavira's life. The day is marked with processions, the sending of cards, and the bathing of images of Mahavira. At the end of the day lay people will return home to a celebratory feast with distinctive recipes.

Mahavira's injunctions for the monks and nuns were however very exacting. Abstinence from every kind of physical comfort and material possession and absolute dedication to the highest ethical and spiritual discipline were enforced. Even today this pure and upright tradition of the monks has been maintained. Thousands of white clad Sanyasins and Sanyasinis and also nude monks (clad in air) move on foot from village to village and town to town, throughout the length and breadth of the country, carrying Mahavira's gospel of peace, non-injury and brotherhood among people.

Myths and legends abound about the other twenty four great Jain teachers from previous ages, but the birth of Mahavira, the Conqueror, is of central importance in Jain communities everywhere. His influence on the Jain practices of ahimsa (non-violence to others), sharing of knowledge, donating medicines and food, and caring for all living creatures is clearly apparent throughout these celebrations.

a) pp 142-144; b) pp 77, 80

More information at ...

1. [Festivals: Mahavir Jayanti](#)
2. [Mahavir Jayanti, the Birthday of Mahavira, and 'Related Issues'](#)
3. [BBC Religion - Jainism: Mahavira](#)
4. [You Tube - Mahavira Jayanti](#)
5. [Times of India - Mahavir Jayanti](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 18 April 2019

MAUNDY THURSDAY *Christian (Western Churches)*

The term 'Maundy' comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means 'command' or 'commandment'. Its use stems from the words of Jesus to his disciples in John 13:34, 'A new commandment I give unto you', and John 15:17 'These things I command you, that you love one another' – the central precept of the Christian gospel.

Maundy Thursday is the day when Christians remember the Last Supper, the meal at which Jesus blessed bread and wine and commanded his disciples to eat and drink in remembrance of him whenever they met to share food and wine. From this instruction comes the institution known under a variety of names – the Eucharist, the Mass, the Holy Communion, the Breaking of Bread, the Divine Liturgy. This celebration has become a central act of worship in almost all Christian traditions.

The night before Jesus was crucified, he shared a Passover supper with his disciples. After supper, he washed his disciples' feet in an incredible demonstration of humility and servanthood. Finally, he gave bread and wine to his followers and told them to partake of it in remembrance of him. The sharing of bread and wine is the basis of today's Holy Communion or Last Supper.

The original Last Supper is believed to have taken place in 'the upper room' of the house reputedly owned by John Mark and his mother, Mary (Acts 12:12). This room, also the site of the Pentecost, is known as the *Coenaculum* or the *Cenacle* and is referred to in St. James' Liturgy as 'Holy and glorious Sion, mother of all churches'. At the site of this place - the first Christian church - a basilica was built in the 4th century. It was later destroyed and subsequently re-built by the Crusaders. Underneath the place is the tomb of David.

In Roman Catholic and some Anglican churches the feet of twelve members of the congregation are washed in remembrance of Jesus' washing the feet of the twelve disciples. The priest girds himself with a cloth and washes the feet of 12 men chosen to represent the Apostles for the ceremony.

In the days when Kings and Queens of England were Catholic, they would wash the feet of 12 subjects in Westminster Abbey, seeing the foot washing rite as an example of service and humility. They would also give money to the poor on this day, a practice said to have begun with St. Augustine of Canterbury in A.D. 597, and performed by royalty since the time of Edward II. Since 1689 the foot washing is no longer performed, but a special coin called "Maundy Money" is minted instead and given to the selected elderly of a representative city.

In Britain today, the Queen follows a very traditional role by giving Maundy Money to a group of pensioners. Every year on this day, she attends a Royal Maundy service in one of the many cathedrals throughout the country. 'Maundy money' is distributed to male and female pensioners from local communities near the Cathedral where the service takes place. Yeomen of the Guard carry the Maundy money in red and white leather purses on their heads on golden alms trays. The money in the red purse is money in lieu of food and clothing while the money in the white purse consists of the Maundy coins. From the fifteenth century, the amount of Maundy coins handed out, and the number of people receiving the coins, is related to the years of the Sovereign's life.

The colours for Maundy Thursday are usually the colours of Lent, royal purple or red violet. Some traditions, however, use red for Maundy Thursday, the colour of the Church, in order to identify with the community of disciples that followed Jesus. Along the same line, some use this day to honour the apostles who were commissioned by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world.

During the Middle Ages, the holy day was sometimes called *Shere* Thursday; *shere* means 'pure'. In England during this time, bearded men found another reason for that name when they sheared their beards on Maundy Thursday as a symbol of the cleansing of body and soul before Easter.

Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:14-20.

a) pp 87-88; b) pp 49, 52, 54, iv.

More information at ...

1. [Fisheaters: Maundy Thursday](#)
2. [What does 'Maundy Thursday' Mean?](#)
3. [Project Britain - Maundy Thursday](#)
4. [Maundy Thursday Poems - in Images](#)
5. [Christianity for Dummies: What is Maundy Thursday?](#)

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Friday, 19 April 2019

GOOD FRIDAY *Christian*

This day commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus. Although essentially a sombre day, it is called 'Good Friday' since, for Christians, it is 'God's Friday', and recalls how Jesus chose to give up his life for others. To Christians, the day is not just a historical event but commemorates the sacrificial death of Jesus, which, along with the resurrection, comprises the heart of the Christian faith.

Church services recall the account of Jesus' death as given in the gospels. Jesus was questioned, beaten, and sentenced to death by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. Soldiers placed a crown of thorns on his head with a sign that read 'The King of the Jews', and stripped him of his clothing. He was led to a place called Golgotha, where they nailed him to a cross along with two other criminals. He died on the cross that afternoon and was laid in a donated tomb, buried according to custom.

The celebration of Good Friday stems from ancient times. According to Egeria, writing in a 4th century letter to her 'sisters', Christians in Jerusalem spent Good Friday at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a large compound of courtyards and chapels built over the site of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. In the morning they engaged in the Veneration of the Cross. From noon to three in the afternoon they attended a series of Bible readings, including the Passion story.

For Christians today, there is no Mass or Eucharist on Good Friday. Communion, if taken, comes from hosts consecrated on Holy Thursday. The major Good Friday worship service begins in the afternoon at 3:00 PM (the time Jesus is said to have died). It consists of seven sermons on the seven last words of Jesus. This service has become popular in many Protestant churches.

The Veneration of the Cross is another frequent practice, when Christians approach a wooden cross and venerate it, often by kneeling before it, or kissing part of it. On Good Friday many churches also celebrate the 'Stations of the Cross' (often called the 'Way of the Cross'), a devotion in which fourteen events surrounding the death of Jesus are commemorated.

The Eastern Churches have different customs for the day they call 'Great Friday'. Evening Prayer ends with a solemn veneration of the *epitaphion*, an embroidered veil containing scenes of Christ's burial. Compline (Night Prayer) includes a lamentation as from the Virgin Mary. On Good Friday night, a symbolic burial of Christ is performed. In Russian Orthodox churches a silver coffin is placed in the church for the faithful to venerate the image of Jesus painted on the winding sheet or shroud.

The Church - stripped of its ornaments, the altar bare, and with the door of the empty tabernacle standing open - is as if it is in mourning. The organ is silent from Holy Thursday until the Alleluia at the Easter Vigil, as are all Church bells and other instruments, the only music during this period being an unaccompanied chant. Traditionally Good Friday was the day when everything was cleaned and whitewashed in preparation for Easter Sunday, but churches are not decorated on Good Friday - in some, pictures and statues are covered over. It is indeed a time of mourning.

Good Friday is an official fast day within the Roman Catholic Church. Fasting means eating only one (meatless) meal on this day. (Fish rather than meat is eaten on all Fridays). Hot cross buns, said to have originated at St Alban's Abbey in 1361, are particularly associated with Good Friday.

The sacramental 'mark' of the cross is important to Catholic people to this day. They are anointed with it, at baptism and at confirmation, and the sign is used at the ordination of a priest or bishop. In the sacrament of the sick the priest anoints the person with the sign of the cross made with oil; and, on Ash Wednesday, foreheads are marked with the sign of the cross made with palm ashes.

The most common cross for Catholics is a crucifix - a cross with the image of Christ's body nailed to it. Crucifixes are found in all Roman Catholic churches and chapels and are regularly carried in liturgical processions. This image is venerated by the faithful in a special ceremony on Good Friday. Matthew 27:32-34, Mark 15:21-32, Luke 23:26-43, John 19:17-27.

a) p 88; b) pp 49-52.

More information at ...

1. [Church Year: Good Friday](#)
2. [Catholic Online: Good Friday](#)
3. [Project Britain: Good Friday \(Holy Friday\)](#)
4. [Anglican Prayers for Good Friday - an anthology](#)
5. [Jerusalem - the Stations of the Cross](#)

Friday, 19 April 2019

HANUMAN JAYANTI Hindu

Hanuman Jayanti is a Hindu festival which recalls the birth of Lord Rama's supreme devotee, the monkey-headed Hanuman, whose feats figure in the Ramayana epic. Hanuman's birth is celebrated at sunrise on the full-moon day of the lunar month of Chaitra.

Hindus believe in ten avatars of Lord Vishnu among a multitude of other gods and goddesses. One of Vishnu's avatars is Rama, whom he became to destroy Ravana, the evil ruler of Lanka. In order to aid Rama in this undertaking, Brahma commanded some gods and goddesses to take on the avatar of '*Vanaras*' or monkeys. Pavana, the god of the wind, was reborn as Hanuman, the wisest, swiftest and strongest of all apes.

Hanuman, the mighty fighter who aided Lord Rama in his expedition against evil forces, has become one of the most popular deities in the Hindu pantheon. Believed to be the eleventh avatar of Lord Shiva, he is worshipped as a symbol of physical strength, perseverance, and devotion. His story in the epic Ramayana - where he is assigned the responsibility of locating Rama's wife Sita, who had been abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka - is known for its ability to equip those who read it with all the ingredients they need to face ordeals and conquer obstructions in this world.

The character of Hanuman teaches us of the unlimited power that lies unused within each of us. Hanuman directed all his energies towards the worship of Lord Rama, and his undying devotion made him such that he became free from physical fatigue. Hanuman's only desire was to go on serving Rama. He perfectly exemplifies '*Dasyabhava devotion*' - one of the nine types of devotion - that bonds the master and the servant. His greatness lies in his complete dedication to his Lord, which also formed the basis of his genial qualities.

Hanuman accordingly has become a model of devotion, strength, knowledge, divine power, bravery, intelligence, and the spirit of selfless service. He devoted his life to his Lord, Rama, and to *Mata* Sita and never displayed his bravery and intelligence without a specific purpose. He is worshipped in different ways by his many devotees: some meditate by repeating his name many times; others read the '*Hanuman Chalisa*'.

People worship Hanuman as a symbol of devotion, magical powers, strength and energy. Those who read the '*Hanuman Chalisa*' do so since it gives the ability to conquer evil spirits and provide peace to the mind. Devotees visit Hanuman temples after a holy bath in the early morning, apply a red *tilak* (vermillion) to the forehead of the Hanuman image, offer *prasad*, perform *arti* by chanting mantras and songs, circulate around the temple and perform many other rituals. As Lord Hanuman was born to the Vanara community, he had a reddish/orange coloured body, and in Hanuman temples his image is also reddish/orange in colour. After puja, people apply red *sindur* to their own foreheads as a form of *prasad* and distribute *laddoo prasad* among others to receive a blessing from Hanuman.

a) pp 121, 139; b) pp 68, 75.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: Lord Hanuman](#)
2. [Hanuman Jayanti - Significance, History and How to Celebrate](#)
3. [Hindu Blog - Hanuman Jayanti](#)
4. [Lord Hanuman - Messages, Photos, Greetings](#)
5. [Swaminayan: Hanuman Jayanti](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 20 April 2019

HOLY SATURDAY (Easter Eve) Christian

This is the last day of Lent. Special services involving the lighting of the *Paschal* Candle and the renewal of baptismal vows take place in the evening in preparation for Easter.

a) pp 88-90; b) pp 49, 52-53.

More information at ...

1. [The Voice: The Days of Holy Week](#)
2. [Fisheaters: Holy Saturday](#)
3. [BBC: Holy Week and Holy Saturday](#)
4. [Holy Saturday - Quotes and Images](#)
5. [About Catholicism: Holy Saturday](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday (evening), 20 April 2019 – Sunday, 21 April 2019

THE NIGHT OF FORGIVENESS / LAILAT-UL-BARA'AH (14th Sha'ban) Muslim

BIRTHDAY of 12th IMAM, Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi Muslim (Shi'a)

On the fourteenth of Sha'ban, the eighth month of the Muslim calendar and two weeks before Ramadan commences, Muslims seek forgiveness for their sins. Some Muslims believe that it is on this night that a person's destiny is fixed by Allah for the coming year, and the night is often spent in prayer, asking for forgiveness and God's guidance. Others, and especially Shi'a Muslims, ignore the night. Some fast during the daytime in preparation for the night. In certain parts of the world Muslims may visit the graves of relatives, and the giving of charity is also traditional. In a number of places the night is marked with firework displays.

Lailat-ul-Bara'ah falls on the day that is celebrated by the Ithna Asheri Shi'a community as being the birthday of the 12th Imam (Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi), and they therefore observe the night in prayer and worship, and then celebrate the birthday during the daytime.

a) p 233; b) p 120.

More information at ...

1. [Travelling the world - Laylat ul Bara'ah](#)
2. [India Forums: Lailat-ul-Bara'h \(Night of Forgiveness\)](#)
3. [Lailat ul Baraah - Muslims pray through the night of forgiveness](#)
4. [The Night of Bara'ah - in pictures](#)
5. [Islamic Board: Lailat al-Bara'ah](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 20 April 2019 – Saturday, 27 April 2019

PASSOVER/PESACH Jewish

This major Jewish festival lasts eight days and commemorates the liberation of the Children of Israel and their Exodus from slavery in Egypt. The highlight is the *Seder* meal, held in each family's home at the beginning of the festival, when the story of their deliverance is recounted, as narrated in the *Haggadah* (the Telling, or the Story). *Matzah*, (unleavened bread) is eaten throughout the festival, as are other foods that contain no leaven (yeast). There is a major spring cleaning in the home shortly before the festival to ensure that no trace of leaven is left in the house during Pesach. Coconut pyramids and *matza* balls (which are put in soups) are foods that might be eaten at this time. Exodus 7-12.

Marking the key events in Jewish history is part of the Jewish calendar's annual programme. Right at the heart of Jewish history is the Exodus with its theme of God's unconditional relationship with his chosen people. A relationship that does not preclude suffering but eventually demonstrates both God's power and His continuing commitment to his people. As a result of the regular telling of the story of slavery and freedom, Jews are called upon (more than 30 times in the Torah) to remember the stranger 'because you were strangers in Egypt'. This sense of having been a slave people and a migrant people is central to Jewish consciousness and is recalled daily in Jewish liturgy and weekly in the practice of *Shabbat*.

a) pp 179-184; b) pp 13, 53, 90, 93-96, 107, 109.

NB The first two days (April 20, 21) and the last two days (April 26, 27) are full festival days when, for Orthodox Jews, work is not permitted.

More information at ...

1. [Jewfaq: Pesach: Passover](#)
2. [Jewish Virtual Library: Passover - Pesach - History and Overview](#)
3. [Chabad: Passover](#)
4. [Passover in Pictures](#)
5. [Aish: Passover](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 21 April 2019

EASTER DAY *Christian (Western Churches)*

Easter Day is the most important festival of the Christian year, since this is when Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus three days after his death by crucifixion in Jerusalem over 2000 years ago. For Christians, Easter is a day marked by special religious services and the gathering of family members together. Easter Candles are lit in churches on the eve of Easter Sunday, as a resurrection symbol of Christ as the light of the world, though some believe that these may have originated in the Pagan customs of lighting bonfires to welcome the rebirth/resurrection of the sun God.

Theologians of all Christian traditions regard Easter as the lynchpin of Christian belief, and view faith in the resurrection of Jesus as the determining factor in assessing orthodoxy. The annual rejoicing that 'Christ is risen; He is risen indeed!' is common to Eastern and Western traditions alike throughout the world.

Easter and the Jewish Passover are closely related, especially in the complex method of fixing the date of Easter. The resurrection of Jesus took place during the Passover. Christians of the Eastern church initially celebrated both holidays together, but the Passover can fall on any day of the week, and Christians of the Western church preferred to celebrate Easter on Sunday, the day of the resurrection.

The name Easter comes from Eostre (pronounced yo'ster), an ancient Anglo-Saxon goddess. In pagan times an annual spring festival was held in her honour. Some Easter customs have come from this and other pre-Christian spring festivals.

The Easter Bunny, a popular image of the festival, originated with the hare, an ancient symbol for the moon. According to legend, the bunny was originally a large, handsome bird belonging to Eostre, the Goddess of Spring. (Eostre is also known as Ostara, a Goddess of fertility who is celebrated at the time of the Spring equinox.) Eostre 'resurrected' the bird into a rabbit, which may explain why the Easter bunny builds a nest and fills it with (coloured) eggs. The first edible Easter bunnies were created in Germany during the early 1800s, made of pastry and sugar.

The white lily as a symbol of the resurrection and of purity has become the typical Easter flower. The Madonna lily was used for years as the Easter lily, but it often failed to bloom in time for Easter, and so the Bermuda, or white trumpet, lily is often used instead.

The egg is another popular symbol of Easter. Eggs were dyed and eaten during spring festivals in ancient Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome. Coloured eggs were not, however, associated with Easter until the 15th century. Many churches today follow old traditions of colouring hard-boiled eggs and giving children little chocolate eggs as symbols of the resurrection.

Matthew 28:1-11, Mark 16:1-10, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-10.

a) p 90; b) pp 11, 13, 16, 28, 38, 46-49.

More information at ...

1. [What is Easter? What do Christians celebrate on Easter?](#)
2. [Fisheaters: Easter Sunday](#)
3. [Project Britain - My Easter, by James](#)
4. [The Meaning of Easter](#)
5. [Calendar Updates: Easter](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 21 April, 2019 - Thursday, 2 May, 2019

RIDVAN *Baha'i*

The most important Baha'i festival. It was in these 12 days that Baha'u'llah declared himself as the Promised One prophesied by the *Bab*. The festival is named after the garden outside Baghdad in which he was staying. The first, ninth and twelfth days are especially significant and are celebrated as holy days, when no work is done. (This is also true of other Baha'i festival dates.) It is during this period that Baha'is elect their local, national and international governing bodies.

a) pp 23-25. b) pp 17, 19-20, 22.

1. [Baha'i Library: Ridvan](#)
2. [Ridvan - The Greatest Baha'i Festival](#)
3. [BBC Religions: Ridvan - History and Significance](#)
4. [The Ridvan Garden](#)
5. [Universal House of Justice - Annual Messages for Ridvan](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 22 April 2019

ADAR MAH PARAB *Zoroastrian (Shenshai - Parsi)*

On the day of Adar, the 9th day, during the month of Adar, the 9th month, Zoroastrians celebrate the birthday of fire. It is customary for Zoroastrians to go to the fire temple to make offerings of sandalwood or incense at this time, and to thank the holy fire for the warmth and light it has given throughout the year. Traditionally on this day food is not cooked in the house as the fire is given a rest and the *Atash Niyayeesh* or litany to the fire is recited in honour of the house fire or the ceremonial oil lamp.

a) p 254-255; b) p 131.

More information at ...

1. [Parsikhabar - Celebrating the Atash nu Parab](#)
2. [Atash nu Parab](#)
3. [Zoroastrian Religion's Most Frequently Asked Question](#)
4. [Images for Adar Mah Parab](#)
5. [Zoroastrian Places of Worship - Atash Bahram - Modern Fire Temples](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 23 April 2019

ST GEORGE'S DAY *National*

St George is the patron saint of England. His particular significance to England is not clear since he lived and died in the Middle East as a martyr for his Christian faith, but it is possible that his popularity grew after the Crusades, when his red cross on a white background was adopted as the symbol of the English Crusaders.

More information at ...

1. [Britannia History: St George](#)
2. [St George's Day observed in Spain](#)
3. [Project Britain - St George's Day](#)
4. [Google creates doodle to celebrate England's patron saint](#)
5. [The English are 'too nervous' to celebrate St George's Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 28 April 2019

PASCHA / EASTER Christian (Orthodox) (Rastafarian)

Easter is calculated on a lunar calendar, and thus moves each year in relation to the solar calendar. Orthodox and Western churches calculate differently when the necessary intercalary adjustments should be made; consequently there is no consistent relationship between the dates of Orthodox and Western timings of Easter. In 2019 the Orthodox Easter cycle dates fall a week later than the Western traditions.

For Orthodox Christians Easter Day is the most important festival of the Christian year, as this is when Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. A vigil is kept during the preceding night, and the resurrection of Christ is greeted with the lighting of candles and the affirmation 'Christ is risen'. Customs include colouring and decorating of hard boiled eggs as symbols of new life - cracking them symbolises the opening of Christ's tomb. All Orthodox Christian communities celebrate Easter *and* the associated cycle of festivals at the same time.

Pascha is the name for Easter in Orthodox Christianity. Pascha is preceded by Great Lent, a time of prayer, fasting and penance, just as Easter in western Christianity is preceded by the Lenten season. Pascha is celebrated differently from Easter in that the service typically begins just before midnight with the Nocturne service, the Easter procession at midnight and then Easter matins, which are sung inside a church. The Pascha services are noteworthy for the canon hymns of St. John of Damascus. The service continues with the singing of the Easter hours and the divine liturgy and the Paschal Sermon of St. John Chrysostom. For fuller information, see below: [It is Pascha - not Easter!](#)

Theologians of all Christian traditions regard Easter as the lynchpin of Christian belief, and view faith in the resurrection of Jesus as the determining factor in assessing orthodoxy. The annual rejoicing that 'Christ is risen; He is risen indeed!' is common to Eastern and Western traditions alike throughout the world.

Matthew 28:1-11, Mark 16:1-10, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-10.

a) p 90; b) pp 11, 13, 16, 28, 38, 46-49.

More information at ...

1. [Orthodox Church - Easter Sunday - The Holy Pascha](#)
2. [Goarch: The Great and Holy Feast of Pascha](#)
3. [Contemporary views of Pascha](#)
4. [Pascha in Images](#)
5. [It is Pascha - not Easter!](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 30 April, 2019

MAY EVE / BELTAINE EVE *Wiccan/Pagan*

See text for Wednesday, **1 May, 2019** below.

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

MAY 2019

Robert Owen

Here is the fifth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Robert Owen's birth took place in May 1771 and for most of the 77 years of his life he was working to deepen and extend the prospects of human wellbeing. Drawing on his experience in managing a cotton mill, he set out to create a model community in a village called New Lanark in Scotland. This combined living and working conditions which were fair and amicable for everyone. They included a school, an Institute for the Formation of Character, and a co-operative store. He sought to apply this model in the US, but after 5 years with mixed results returned to England. Emphasis on mutuality and collaborative endeavour were the main features of his lifelong campaigning, especially for the development of trade unions and latterly spiritualism as a means of exposure to moral exemplars.

<http://www.robert-owen-museum.org.uk/node/8>

<http://spartacus-educational.com/IRowen.htm>

http://robert-owen-museum.org.uk/ro_writings

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/owen>

<https://www.bbc.com/education/clips/zx6w2hv>

<http://newlanark.org/learningzone/newlanarkcasestudy.php>

<http://steampunkchicago.com/articles/new-harmony-in-indiana>

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 1 May, 2019

BELTAINE *Wiccan/Pagan*

BELTAINE *Druid*

The wheel of the year continues to turn and spring gives way to summer's full bloom and the fertility of the land is at its height. Many pagans celebrate Beltaine by lighting fires and leaping over them, or with maypole dances, symbolizing the mystery of the Sacred Marriage of Goddess and God.

Beltaine honours Life. It represents the peak of Spring and the beginning of Summer. Earth energies are at their strongest and most active. All of life is bursting with potent fertility and at this point in the Wheel of the Year, the potential becomes conception. On May Eve the sexuality of life and the earth is at its peak. Abundant fertility, on all levels, is the central theme. For this is the night of the Greenwood Marriage. It is about sexuality and sensuality, passion, vitality and joy. And about conception. A brilliant moment in the Wheel of the Year to bring ideas, hopes and dreams into action. And have some fun.....

Above all Beltaine is a Fire Festival. The word 'Beltane' originates from the Celtic God 'Bel', meaning 'the bright one' and the Gaelic word 'teine' meaning fire. Together they make 'Bright Fire', or 'Goodly Fire' and traditionally bonfires were lit to honour the Sun and encourage the support of Bel and the Sun's light to nurture the emerging future harvest and protect the community. Bel had to be won over through human effort. Traditionally all fires in the community were put out and a special fire was kindled for Beltaine. This was the Tein-eigen, the need fire. People jumped the fire to purify, cleanse and to bring fertility. Couples jumped the fire together to pledge themselves to each other. Cattle and other animals were driven through the smoke as a protection from disease and to bring fertility. At the end of the evening, the villagers would take some of the Teineigen to start their fires anew.

As Beltane is the Great Wedding of the Goddess and the God, it is a popular time for pagan weddings or handfastings, a traditional betrothal for 'a year and a day' after which the couple would either choose to stay together or part without recrimination. Today, the length of commitment is a matter of choice for the couple, and can often be for life. Handfasting ceremonies are often unique to the couple, but include common elements, most importantly the exchange of vows and rings (or a token of their choice). The act of handfasting always involves tying the hands ('tying the knot') of the two people involved, in a figure of eight, at some point in the ceremony and then later unbinding them. This is done with a red cord or ribbon. Tying the hands together symbolises that the two people have come together and the untying means that they remain together of their own free will.

Another common element is 'jumping the broomstick' - this goes back to a time when two people who could not afford a church ceremony, or want one, would be accepted in the community as a married couple if they literally jumped over a broom laid on the floor. The broom marked a 'threshold', moving from an old life to a new one.

Mead and cakes are often shared in communion as part of the ceremony. Mead is known as the Brew of the Divine, made from honey which is appropriate for a love ceremony (and is the oldest alcoholic drink known to humankind).

There is a natural optimism and forward looking aspect to most pagan celebrations, and nowhere more so than in Spring and Summertime.

More information at ...

1. [The Goddess and the Green Man](#)
2. [Cultural Heritage of Ireland: The festival of Beltaine and the Beltany Stone Circle](#)
3. [Spirit of Old - Beltaine](#)
4. [Newgrange: Beltane - The Fire Festival](#)
5. [Chalice Centre: May - Beltaine: The Return of Summer](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 2 May 2019

YOM HA-SHOAH (Holocaust Day) *Jewish*

A day of remembrance when Jewish people remember the six million Jews, including one and a half million children, who were victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Memorial candles are lit and special services are held. The date is chosen as the closest date (in the Jewish year) to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

More information at ...

1. [Yom Hashoah - Holocaust Remembrance Day](#)
2. [Reform Judaism: Yom HaShoah - Holocaust Remembrance Day](#)
3. [How to talk to kids about the Holocaust](#)
4. [Yom Hashoah - Remembrance Day Siren in Israel](#)
5. [Jewish Virtual Library: Yom Ha'Shoah - Holocaust Memorial Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 6 May 2019 to Tuesday, 4 June 2019

RAMADAN *Muslim* (Ramadan is the name of the 9th month of the Islamic Calendar.)

The Muslim year is a lunar year which is about 11 days shorter than the solar year on which the Gregorian (British) calendar is based, so in the Gregorian calendar Ramadan occurs ten or eleven days earlier each year.

During the month of Ramadan Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. Fasting (*sawm*) is the fourth of the five pillars of Islam, requiring self-discipline and giving everyone some experience of deprivation. Those who are not able to fast are expected to give charity to compensate for the 'lost' days. While children may be encouraged to fast, the full fast is not compulsory until puberty is reached, often by the age of 12, but many young people still attempt to keep some, or even all of it.

It is most important that Muslims show intent before they fast. It is a requirement that they recite a short prayer of intent either before they sleep or just before *Suhoor*, the pre-fast meal. No food or drink may be consumed during the hours of daylight during Ramadan, and those fasting must also abstain from smoking and from sexual relations. According to the Quran, one may eat and drink at any time during the night *'until you can plainly distinguish a white thread from a black thread by the daylight: then keep the fast until night'*.

Muslims who are travelling or sick and women who are pregnant or nursing a child are allowed to postpone their fast. These are all required to make up the days of missed fasting during the year ahead. After the custom of the Prophet, the fast is traditionally broken each evening by taking dates and water (*iftar*).

For Muslims Ramadan one of the holiest months of the year, and one they dedicate to spiritual renewal, prayer and intensive devotional reading of the *Qur'an*. It is the month in which, according to Islamic belief, the Prophet received the first revelation of verses of the *Qur'an*, though the actual night is unknown. This night is called *Lailat ul Qadr*. To stand in prayer throughout the night is said to be 'better than a thousand months of worship'. Ramadan is often called 'the month of the Qur'an', and many Muslims attempt to recite as much of the Qur'an as they can during the month. Most Sunni mosques arrange a recital of one thirtieth of the Qur'an each night during the *Taraweeh* prayers, which are longer than the usual evening prayers and are special ones for Ramadan.

Surah 2:183-188.

a) p 218-220; b) pp 11, 13, 110, 113-114, 120, 140, 143.

More information at ...

1. [Mkidwai Tripod: Facts of Ramadan - Fasting](#)
2. [BBC Religions: Islam - Ramadan](#)
3. [Ramadan for Kids](#)
4. [Ramadan in Pictures](#)
5. [Jannah: Ramadan - Articles, Resources and Activities for Kids](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 9 May 2019

YOM HA'ATZMA'UT Jewish

Israeli Independence Day, commemorating the declaration of independence of Israel in 1948.

More information at ...

1. [My Jewish Learning: Yom Ha'Atzma'ut](#)
2. [Union of Reform Judaism - Yom Ha'Atzma'ut](#)
3. [Yom Ha'Atzma'ut - Independence Day celebrations in Jerusalem](#)
4. [Imagesfor Yom Ha'Atzmaut](#)
5. [BJ: Yom Ha'zikaron/Yom Ha'atzmaut](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 12 May 2019 – Saturday, 18 May 2019

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK *Christian*

Initiated in 1945, this week is devoted to fund raising by members of various churches, mainly through house to house collections and sales of goods of various kinds. The money given is for work with the needy throughout the world. Christian Aid works in nearly 60 countries, helping people, regardless of religion or race, to improve their own lives and tackle the causes of poverty and injustice.

More information at ...

1. [You Tube: This is Christian Aid](#)
2. [Christian Aid Week 2018 in Worcester](#)
3. [Life and Work: A Prayer for Christian Aid Week](#)
4. [Meet our Neighbour - Morsheda - Watch the video](#)
5. [Christian Aid - Our Aims and Values](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 19 May

VESAKHA PUJA / WESAK / BUDDHA DAY *Buddhist*

On Wesak Theravadin Buddhists celebrate the birth, the enlightenment under the *Bodhi* Tree in Bodhgaya in North India, and the final passing away of Gautama Buddha. Mahayanist Buddhists have separate days for each of these events but on Buddha Day they celebrate both the birth and the enlightenment of the Buddha. They also celebrate his enlightenment on *Bodhi* Day in December. It is common in almost all Buddhist traditions to decorate the houses where Buddhists live with lanterns and garlands, and the temples are ringed with little oil lamps, consisting of a simple cloth or cotton wick in a small clay vessel of oil. Many Buddhists also send 'Wesak cards' to their friends.

On this day particular stress is laid on the Buddha's enlightenment and many lay people come together at monasteries for this, the biggest of all the Buddhist festivals. No matter how important the Dharma and the Sangha may be in Buddhist belief and practice, it is the Buddha himself who is the central figure and originator of Buddhist teaching, and the celebration at this festival of his enlightenment is of central importance to all Buddhist communities.

a) pp 7, 45-47, 49-50, 54; b) pp 13, 30, 32-35, 37, 139.

More information at ...

1. [Crystal Links: Wesak](#)
2. [The Significance of Vesak - Buddha Day](#)
3. [BBC: Wesak](#)
4. [You Tube: The Wesak Festival - the full moon of the Buddha](#)
5. [Souled Out: The Significance of Wesak](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 23 May

LAG B'OMER Jewish

The *Omer* is a period of 49 days, lasting from Pesach to Shavuot. It is a time of sadness, relieved on this, the 33rd day, by a break in the days of mourning. Lag b'Omer recalls the end of a plague in Roman times during the lifetime of Rabbi Akiva, and is often celebrated by out of door, fresh air activities. A large number of weddings take place on this day, since they are not usually permitted during most of the rest of the Omer period.

a) p 207; b) p 107.

More information at ...

1. [Jewfaq: The Counting of the Omer](#)
2. [My Jewish Learning: Lag B'Omer](#)
3. [Chabad: Lag B'Omer](#)
4. [Lag B'Omer Customs](#)
5. [Aish: Counting the Omer](#)

Friday, 24 May, 2019

ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF THE BAB *Baha'i*

The *Bab* heralded the arrival of Baha'ullah and was co-founder of the Baha'i faith. He inaugurated the Baha'i calendar which is numbered from 1844, the year of this declaration. a) p 27; b) pp 19, 21-22.

More information at ...

1. [Baha'i teachings - declaration of the Bab on how religion begins](#)
2. [Mythic Maps: Anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab](#)
3. [Enable Me to Grow: Observing the Declaration of the Bab](#)
4. [Anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab](#)
5. [Huffington Post - enter the gate](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 24 May 2019 Zoroastrian (*Shenshai, Parsi*)

Thursday, 26 December 2019 Zoroastrian (*Iranian*)

ZARATOSHT NO DISO

Zaratosht no diso is the death anniversary of the Prophet Zarathushtra and is a sorrowful occasion. Tradition records that this is when he was assassinated at the age of 77. It is customary to visit the Fire Temple, participate in special remembrance prayers to him and to the *Fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors), and ponder upon the *Gathas* or Hymns of Zarathushtra, which embody his eternal message to humanity.

No one knows how Zarathushtra died, allegedly at age 77. Many legends, and several Zoroastrian traditions, say that he was killed, while praying in the sanctuary, by a foreign enemy of the king; but many scholars believe that Zarathushtra died peacefully.

Although this day is an occasion of sadness, there is an eternal optimism at the heart of Zoroastrian belief which shines through even the darkest of days such as this.

a) p 255; b) p 131.

More information at ...

1. [Zartosht no Diso - a History](#)
2. [I Love India: Festivals/Zartosht-no-diso Celebrations](#)
3. [Crystal Links: Zoroaster and Death](#)
4. [The Parsee Society: Images for Zartosht no diso](#)
5. [Zarathustra.com: The Life and Death of Zarathustra](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

***Tuesday evening, 28 May 2019**

LAILAT-UL-QADR / THE NIGHT OF POWER / HONOUR / DIGNITY Muslim (Shi'a)

This commemorates the night in 610 CE when the prophet Muhammad received his first visit from the angel Jibril (Gabriel) and his revelation of the *Qur'an*. Muslims believe that the date of this night is kept secret by God, but that they 'may seek the Night of Dignity in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan' (Bukhaari, quoting Aisha, who heard it from the Prophet). Many Muslims spend the last ten days and nights of Ramadan secluded in the mosque, praying and studying the *Qur'an*, to ensure they receive the special benefits promised for their prayers and devotions on Lailat-ul-Qadr. Muslims 'looking for' Lailat ul Qadr tend to gather at sunset and then spend the rest of the night till dawn in the mosque or some other place of worship.

For the purpose of communal activities, or for those who can only spend one night in devotions at the mosque, Sunnis favour the 27th day of Ramadan (beginning the evening of the 26th) whilst the Shi'a favour the 23rd day of Ramadan (beginning the evening of the 22nd). Of this night, the *Qur'an* states, 'Lailat-ul-Qadr is better than a thousand months.' Surah 97:1-5 (see esp. 97: 3).

The first revelation: Surah 2:185.

a) p 218; b) pp 112,120.

More information at ...

1. [Lailatul Qadar - The Night of Power](#)
2. [Laylatul Qadr - The Night of Power](#)
3. [Win Calendar - Lailat-ul-Qadr](#)
4. [Sound Vision: Lailat ul Qadr](#)
5. [Duas: 'Common' A'amaal for Laylatul Qadr](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 29 May, 2019

ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASCENSION OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH Baha'í

This day commemorates the death of Baha'u'llah at Bahji, near Acre, in northern Israel in 1892. His shrine there is the holiest place on earth for Baha'is and is the focus towards which all Baha'is face when praying.

a) p 27; b) pp 19, 21-22.

More information

1. [Baha'i Reference Library: Ascension of Baha'u'llah](#)
2. [Bodybuilding: Baha'is commemorate Ascension of Baha'u'llah](#)
3. [Paintdrawer: Ascension of Baha'u'llah](#)
4. [You Tube: Ascension of Baha'u'llah](#)
5. [Good Reads - Quotations from Bahá'u'lláh](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 30 May 2019

ASCENSION DAY (40th day after Easter) *Christian (Western Churches)*

(The Catholic Church in England and Wales celebrates it on June 6 or the following Sunday, 9 June.)

Ascension Day commemorates the last earthly appearance of the Risen Christ, who, according to Christian belief, ascended into heaven in the presence of many witnesses. It is one of the four most important dates in the Christian calendar. Observed generally by Catholics and Anglicans, it is also known as the Feast of Ascension, and occurs on the Thursday 40 days after Easter. It marks the end of the Easter season and falls ten days before Pentecost.

According to the accounts in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus appeared to many of his disciples during the 40 days following his resurrection to instruct them on how to carry out his teachings. On the 40th day, he came again to the Apostles and led them out to the Mount of Olives where he instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Then, as they were watching, he ascended into the clouds.

According to Augustine of Hippo, one of the early church fathers, the Feast of Ascension originated with the Apostles. John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa, contemporaries of Augustine, refer to it as being one of the oldest feasts practised by the Church, possibly going as far back as AD 68. There is no written evidence, however, of the Church honoring Ascension Day until Augustine's time in the fourth century.

As an Ecumenical feast, Ascension Day is one of the six holy days where attendance at Mass is mandatory for Roman Catholics and Anglicans. The event is generally a one-day public commemoration, although the Church, in keeping with earlier traditions regarding festivals, offers devotions for seven days. The night before the feast, priests and deacons attend a vigil of prayers and scripture readings. On the day of the feast, Mass is celebrated and the Paschal candle, which was lit on Easter Sunday, is extinguished. Liturgies proclaiming the finished work of salvation and the ascension of the glorified Christ into Heaven are recited, followed later by evening prayers. At the end of the seven-day devotion, two additional days are kept by the priests, making a total of nine days (a *novena*). The *novena* allows for the preparation of Pentecost, which takes place the next day.

For many Christians, Ascension Day's meaning provides a sense of hope that the glorious and triumphant return of Jesus is near. It is a reminder of the ever-present Spirit of God, watching over and protecting them as they spread the light of Jesus' truth throughout the world

Ascension Day is associated across Britain with various festivals ranging from Well Dressing in Derbyshire to the Planting of the 'Penny Hedge' (or 'Horngarth') in the harbour at Whitby, Yorkshire. It is also the day for Beating the Bounds, or Boundaries, of a church's parish. The custom was once found in almost every English parish, but now is only carried out in a few places. In modern times, it involves people in the locality walking around their farm, manorial, church or civil boundaries, pausing as they pass certain trees, walls and hedges that denote the extent of the boundary to exclaim, pray and ritually 'beat' particular landmarks with sticks.

In England, eggs laid on Ascension Day are said to 'never go bad' and will guarantee good luck for a household if placed in the roof. In Devon, it was an ancient belief that the clouds always formed into the familiar Christian image of a lamb on Ascension Day. If the weather is sunny on Ascension Day, the summer will be long and hot. If it rains on the day, crops will do badly and livestock will suffer from disease. According to Welsh superstition, it is unlucky to do any work on Ascension Day.

Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:50-53, Acts of the Apostles 1:9-11.

a) p 92; b) pp 49-53.

More information at ...

1. [Share Faith: Ascension Day](#)
2. [Amish America: How do Amish Observe Ascension Day?](#)
3. [Project Britain - Ascension Day](#)
4. [Bartleby: Quotations for Ascension Day](#)
5. [Time and Date: Ascension Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

***Friday evening, 31 May 2019**

LAILAT-UL-QADR / THE NIGHT OF POWER / HONOUR / DIGNITY Muslim (Sunni)

This commemorates the night in 610 CE when the prophet Muhammad received his first visit from the angel Jibril (Gabriel) and his revelation of the *Qur'an*. Muslims believe that the date of this night is kept secret by God, but that they 'may seek the Night of Dignity in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan' (Bukhaari, quoting Aisha, who heard it from the Prophet). Many Muslims spend the last ten days and nights of Ramadan secluded in the mosque, praying and studying the *Qur'an*, to ensure they receive the special benefits promised for their prayers and devotions on Lailat-ul-Qadr. Muslims 'looking for' Lailat ul Qadr tend to gather at sunset and then spend the rest of the night till dawn in the mosque or some other place of worship.

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The first revelation: Surah 2:185.

b) p 218; b) pp 112,120.

More information at ...

1. [Lailatul Qadar - The Night of Power](#)
2. [Laylatul Qadr - The Night of Power](#)
3. [Win Calendar - Lailat-ul-Qadr](#)
4. [Sound Vision: Lailat ul Qadr](#)
5. [Duas: 'Common' A'amaal for Laylatul Qadr](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

JUNE 2019

Helen Keller

Here is the sixth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Helen Keller died in June 1968 at the age of 88. A victim of either meningitis or scarlet fever before she was two years old, her life story is one of overcoming the limitations of being blind and deaf. The process of her learning the meaning of words in a soundless, sightless world is extraordinary, as is her giving voice to them without hearing. She went on to university graduation and extensive writing. Even more significantly, throughout her life she worked continually for the interests of others, using her own high profile to do that both within the USA and internationally. She certainly did that on behalf of those variously disabled, but also in socialist terms of humanity generally. She was not shy of being labelled a political activist, nor in later life of being identified as inspired by the religious teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

<https://www.womenofthehall.org/inductee/helen-keller>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLqyKeMQfmY>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ch_H8pt9M8

<https://www.quora.com/How-did-Helen-Keller-learn-to-read-write-and-speak>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/06/16/what-helen-keller-saw>

<https://www.historyextra.com/period/20th-century/9-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-helen-keller>

<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/play/2920/The-Real-Helen-Keller>

<https://isreview.org/issue/96/politics-helen-keller>

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/895>

<http://www.perkins.org/history/archives/helen-keller-and-anne-sullivan-collections>

http://www.hki.org/our-work#.Wv06y_kvzIU

<http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/units/Byrnes-famous/keller.html>

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday evening, 4 June 2019

RAMADAN ENDS Muslim

Wednesday, 5 June 2019

EID-UL-FITR / FEAST OF FAST BREAKING (1st Shawwal) Muslim

Celebrations of this festival may extend over the first three days of the month of Shawwal, the month following Ramadan, although only the first day's celebration is religiously sanctioned. It is a time for making gifts to the poor (*Zakat-ul-Fitr*, the charity of the fast, must be paid before the *Eid* prayer). Now is a time for new clothes, good food, and presents for children. Families get together and contact friends, especially those who live far away. The community will assemble for *Eid* prayer and a sermon at the mosque or at a large place which will accommodate the whole community of the town or village. The traditional greeting is '*Eid Mubarak*' - 'a happy and blessed *Eid*'. (There is no reference to this in the *Qur'an* but there is in the *Hadith*, the traditions of the Prophet).

Interesting things to know about Eid:

1. It is customary to eat breakfast before the special prayer of Eid, as Prophet Muhammad used to eat something sweet before offering his prayers.
2. In Muslim countries Eid is an official public holiday that lasts for three days
3. As the crescent moon of Eid appears on different dates in different countries, many Muslim communities celebrate Eid on the day it appears over the sky above Mecca.
4. The Eid prayer is different from the regular prayer known as *Adhaan*. The special prayer can be done anytime between the *Ishraq* (dawn) and *Zawal* (midday) prayers.
5. In Turkey, Eid is called *Ramazan* Bayram which means Ramadan Feast. The Eid delicacies are also known as *Şeker Bayram*, which is inspired from the popular Turkish sweet baklava.
6. Muslims usually give a special gift of money to charity also known as *Zakat-ul-Fitr* which is collected and given to Muslims who are poor or in need.
7. In Indonesia, Eid is also called *Idul Fitri* or *Lebaran*. On the day of celebrations many Indonesian Muslims visit the graves of their family members and clean the gravesite and offer prayers to Allah for forgiveness.

This festival is known as the 'lesser Eid', though it is the more popular of the two major Eids that Muslims observe. The contrast with the preceding fast days of Ramadan ensures that it is welcomed with great festivity and exciting foods.

a) pp 220-223; b) pp 110,112, 114-116, 120, 140, vii.

More information at ...

1. [Eid-al-Fitr – History and Interesting Facts about the Festival](#)
2. [Duas: Eid ul Fitr - 1st Shawwl - Eid salat](#)
3. [Islamic City: Eid ul Fitr](#)
4. [Eid ul Fitr - Everything you need to know](#)
5. [The Huffington Post: Articles on Eid Ul Fitr](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 6 June 2019

ASCENSION DAY (40th day after Easter) *Christian (Roman Catholic)*

(In England and Wales the Catholic Church celebrates it on the following Sunday, 9 June.)

Ascension Day commemorates the last earthly appearance of the Risen Christ, who, according to Christian belief, ascended into heaven in the presence of many witnesses. It is one of the four most important dates in the Christian calendar. Observed generally by Catholics and Anglicans, it is also known as the Feast of Ascension, and occurs on the Thursday 40 days after Easter. It marks the end of the Easter season and falls ten days before Pentecost.

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Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:50-53, Acts of the Apostles 1:9-11.

a) p 92; b) pp 49-53.

More information at ...

1. [Share Faith: Ascension Day](#)
2. [Amish America: How do Amish Observe Ascension Day?](#)
3. [Project Britain - Ascension Day](#)
4. [Bartleby: Quotations for Ascension Day](#)
5. [Time and Date: Ascension Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 7 June 2019

DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL / DUANWUJIE / TUAN YANG CHIEH Chinese

Most notable now for the great dragon boat races which take place between slim rowing boats (sometimes 100 feet long) shaped like dragons. People also go down to the rivers to picnic and celebrate on boats. Originally the festival commemorated the suicide by drowning of the poet and statesman Ch'u Yuan in about 279 BCE.

a) pp 69-71; b) pp 38, 43-44.

More information at ...

1. [Travel China Guide: Dragon Boat Festival](#)
2. [The Dragon Boat - History and Culture](#)
3. [The Chinese Dragon Boat Festival for Chinese Children](#)
4. [Dragon Boat Festival in Pictures](#)
5. [The Chinese Dragon Boat Festival](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 9 June 2019

PENTECOST / WHIT SUNDAY *Christian (Western Churches)*

As the second most important festival in the Christian year, *Pentecost* is often seen as the 'birthday' of the Church, since this is when the disciples of Jesus first proclaimed the Gospel after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is named after the Jewish festival (Shavuot) on which this event happened, which is celebrated 50 days after Passover. The name comes from the Greek *pentekoste*, "fiftieth". Pentecost for Christians accordingly falls on the Sunday 50 days after Easter. The alternative name of Whitsuntide comes from the custom of converts presenting themselves for baptism on this day dressed in white.

Clergy in church often wear robes with red in their design as a symbol of the flames in which the Bible says the Holy Spirit came to the early disciples. The symbols of Pentecost are those of the Holy Spirit and include the dove, the wind, the breath of God and flames. The Acts of the Apostles tells how the followers of Jesus found themselves speaking in foreign languages, inspired by the Holy Spirit. People passing by at first thought that they must be drunk, but the apostle Peter told the crowd that he and the other apostles were full of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost is a special day for all Christian communities, but it is emphasised particularly by Pentecostal churches, which preach that the Holy Spirit is available to believers during all of their services.

The central Christian belief that God is three in one - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - is at the heart of Christian teaching about the nature of God and is central to preaching and teaching both at this time and on the following Sunday, Trinity Sunday. It is the belief in the divinity of Christ and the reality of the Holy Spirit which separates orthodox Christian faith from other monotheistic religions.

Acts of the Apostles 2:1-13.

a) *p* 92; b) *pp* 13, 16, 46-48, 53-54, 96, 140, 143

More information at ...

1. [Fisheaters: Vigil of the Pentecost and Whitsunday](#)
2. [Patheos: What is Pentecost? Why Does It Matter?](#)
3. [What is Pentecost?](#)
4. [Watch 'The Spirit of Pentecost' - a short film](#)
5. [Explore Faith: Questions of Faith and Doubt - Pentecost](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 9 June 2019 – Monday, 10 June 2019

SHAVUOT / THE FEAST OF WEEKS / PENTECOST Jewish

Shavuot, also known as the Feast of Weeks or the festival of First Fruits, is a two day festival which falls seven weeks after Pesach – a period of preparation marked by the *Counting of the Omer*. It celebrates the supreme gift of the *Torah* to Moses on Mount Sinai, and so to the people of Israel who covenanted to follow its teachings. It also marks the end of the spring barley crop and the time when the first wheat harvest was taken to the Temple by all male Jews, since like Pesach and Sukkot this is one of three times of year when pilgrimages to Jerusalem take place. Synagogues are decorated with greenery and flowers and for Orthodox Jews work is not permitted throughout the festival.

Dairy foods, such as blintzes and cheesecakes, are traditionally eaten for at least one meal during Shavuot. No-one is quite sure of the origin of this custom, though some have suggested it is as a reminder that the children of Israel were on their way to a land flowing with milk and honey, and that the gift of the *Torah* to them was the sweetest of gifts. It is also possible that after their journey through the wilderness no meat was available to them.

During the festival the book of Ruth is read, which records the non-Jewish Ruth's enthusiastic commitment to throw in her lot with her mother-in-law, thus providing Jews with the prototype of possible conversion to Judaism, and notes that one of the significant descendants of this Moabite convert is King David.

Just as the Israelites spent three days cleansing themselves in preparation for the gift of the *Torah* (and then had to be awoken by Moses with the blowing of the shofar and a storm of thunder and lightning at the foot of Mount Sinai), so some Jews today ready themselves for this important gift by studying the *Torah* throughout the night. The threefold nature of scripture (*Torah*, Prophets and Writings) is also kept in mind at this time, and some welcome the symbolism of threes by eating three cornered ravioli and other dairy foods.

The psalm of praise (the Hallel) and the memorial service (Yizkor) are read on this day, as on all festivals, and the symbolism of the covenant of Marriage between the Almighty and His chosen people is often central to Jewish thought, from disaster. Many Liberal (and American Reform) communities celebrate confirmation for young people at this time, since it was traditionally the occasion when the Jewish People accepted the *Torah*, and stress the role of education as the foundation of all Jewish life.

Exodus 19 & 20, Leviticus 23:15-22, Deuteronomy 16:9-12.

pp 184-187; b) pp 13, 91, 95-97, 107, 109, 142.

More information at ...

1. [Reform Judaism: Shavuot](#)
2. [Jewish Facts: Shavuot](#)
3. [Torahtots - Shavuos](#)
4. [Chabad: Shavuot Recipes](#)
5. [About Judaism: Shavuot](#)

Sunday, 16 June 2019

MARTYRDOM OF GURU ARJAN (1606) *Sikh*

This festival is one of the major Sikh *gurpurbs*, and as with other *gurpurbs*, the day is preceded by an *akhand path*, a continuous reading of the Sikh scriptures. It is observed for several reasons. It marks the day when the fifth Guru was put to death after severe tortures on the orders of the Moghul Emperor, Jehangir. Traditionally, a cooling drink known as a *Chabeel* is distributed on this day, recalling that the Guru was tortured in the extreme heat of June.

Guru Arjan became the first Sikh martyr, having given his life upholding justice. The Guru lived out the divine message (*Gurbani*) of conquering death and suffering. He remained fearless in defending the truth, and showed how one can remain steadfast. Guru Arjan said, lived and showed that he could accept *Shaheedi* (martyrdom) but he would not accept restrictions on individuals being able to practise their faith. He claimed that the way a leader or prophet lives determines the character of the followers of that faith; a Sikh should live in dignity and die with honour, and never tolerate insult or oppression.

The Guru also laid the foundation of the *Harmandir Sahib* (the Golden Temple) in the middle of the tank (pool) at Amritsar. Many of his followers wanted it to be the tallest building in the new town. Guru Arjan however felt otherwise and reminded his followers that humility should be a great virtue. The temple was therefore built on as low an elevation as possible. To counter the Muslim belief that God's House is in the west and the Hindu belief that it is in the east where the sun rises, the *Harmandir Sahib* had entrances on all four sides. Guru Arjan exclaimed; 'My faith is for the people of all castes and all creeds, from whichever direction they come and to whichever direction they bow.' To help raise money for these monumental public works projects, the Guru declared that all Sikhs should donate a tenth of their earnings to charity.

Guru Arjan is equally notable for drawing together compositions by the first five Gurus, to which he added hymns by other saints from Hindu and Muslim backgrounds. In this way he compiled the *Adi Granth* (the Sikh scriptures), and eliminated the inclusion of other false writings put forward by his brother and others, who not only claimed they had material written by the earlier Gurus but also sought to eliminate his favourable references to Hindu and Muslim viewpoints. When complete, the handwritten version of these scriptures was bound and then lodged in the *Harmandir Sahib*, where the *Adi Granth* was opened and read every day.

a) pp 240-242, 244; b) pp 123, 126.

More information at ...

1. [Search Sikhism - Guru Arjan Dev](#)
2. [Sikh 24: Shaheedi of Guru Arjan Dev Jee](#)
3. [Sikhs Org.: The Fifth Master Guru Arjan Dev \(1563-1606\)](#)
4. [Fifth Sikh Guru - Guru Arjan Dev Ji Sahib](#)
5. [Sikhiwiki: Martyrdom of Guru Arjan](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, June 16 2019

TRINITY SUNDAY Christian (Western Churches)

(Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrate All Saints at this time.)

Trinity Sunday, sometimes known as 'The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity', is celebrated in the West on the Sunday after Pentecost/Whitsunday, when Christians reflect on the mystery of God, who is seen as One but is understood in and through God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Orthodox Churches have no specific recognition of Trinity Sunday.

The Church has been celebrating the Trinity in its life and worship since its earliest days. Evidence of this can be seen in Trinitarian baptismal formulae. Many early liturgies and prayers refer to the persons of the Trinity, as well as collects, benedictions and doxologies that end with a Trinitarian statement: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all'. (2 Corinthians 13:14.)

The Trinity is one of the most fascinating - and controversial - of Christian teachings. It is described as a 'mystery'. By mystery the Church does not mean a conundrum or a riddle, but rather that the Trinity is a reality above our human comprehension which we may begin to grasp, but ultimately must know through worship, symbol, and faith. It is ineffable as well as incomprehensible.

The Nicene definition of the Trinity developed over time, based on Scripture and Tradition. The New Testament calls the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit 'God', yet the three are also clearly distinct. The problem was that the Church had to reconcile the divinity of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit with Jewish monotheism. By the middle of the 2nd century the Church began using the word Trinity to describe this relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit.

Then in the 4th century a presbyter named Arius denied that the Father and Son were both true God and co-eternal, so that his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria, challenged and deposed him. Eventually the Arian controversy spread, and the emperor Constantine, newly fascinated with Christianity, convened a council of bishops in AD 325 in Nicaea to deal with Arianism. It was there that the Church drew up the beginnings of the current Nicene Creed, the bastion of Trinitarian belief.

Christianity adopted this complex view of the nature of God because it was the only way they could make sense of belief in the One God in the context of the events and teaching of the Bible. The idea of the Trinity does not supersede monotheism; it interprets it, in the light of a specific set of revelatory events: God the Father - revealed by the Old Testament to be Creator, Father and Judge; God the Son - who lived on earth amongst human beings; God the Holy Spirit - who filled the followers of Jesus with new life and power.

It is impossible to overemphasise the importance of this doctrine that God is one in three persons. This has correctly been called 'the distinctive teaching of the Christian faith', that which sets apart the approach of Christians to the 'fearful mystery of the deity' from all other approaches and beliefs. The creed, the fundamental statement of Christian belief, sets out the Trinitarian nature of God. Baptism is carried out 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'. Eucharistic prayers are firmly Trinitarian in concept. The doxology is Trinitarian.

Relevant to the day are the natural symbols of the Trinity - the shamrock used by St. Patrick to explain the Trinity to the ancient Irish; the pansy - viola tricolour - called the 'Trinity Flower'; a candle with three flames; the triangle; the trefoil; three interlocking circles; and so many others. They all seek to explain, though with only partial success, what is an inexplicable mystery.

Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 1:18; 15:26.

a) 81, 92-93, 103; b) 53-54.

More information at ...

1. [Church Year: Trinity Sunday](#)
2. [Fisheaters: Trinity Sunday](#)
3. [Trinity Sunday - a basic view](#)
4. [Trinity Sunday in Images](#)
5. [The Painted Prayer Book - Trinity Sunday - Drenched in the Mystery](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 16 June 2019

PENTECOST *Christian (Orthodox Churches)*

An important festival in the Christian year, *Pentecost* is often seen as the 'birthday' of the Church, since this is when the disciples of Jesus first proclaimed the Gospel after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is named after the Jewish festival day on which this event happened.

Acts of the Apostles 2:1-13.

a) *p* 92; b) *pp* 13, 16, 46-48, 53-54, 96, 140, 143

More information at ...

1. [Saint and Feasts - Holy Pentecost](#)
2. [Orthodoxy: The Church Year - Pentecost: The Descent of the Holy Spirit](#)
3. [Pentecost - the Descent of the Holy Spirit](#)
4. [Orthodox Pentecost in Images](#)
5. [Russian Orthodox Church of Three Saints: Pentecost - The Birthday of the Church](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 20 June 2019

DAY OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE INSTITUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION Christian (Anglican)
(Also known as *Corpus Christi*)

The Anglican church celebrates this festival on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday (which falls on 16 June in 2019). It recalls the action of Jesus when he instituted the celebration of Holy Communion. The origin of this sacrament lay in the communal Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples just before His arrest, described in all four of the Gospels.

In the Church of England the celebration is known as 'The Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion (Corpus Christi)' and has the status of a Festival. Although its observance is optional, where kept, it is typically celebrated as a major holy day, with joyous and colourful processions. (Roman Catholics designate it as 'The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)'). (See June 3 below for a further description.)

There are, two basic elements that are essential to Anglican worship: the Word that is read and preached; and the sacrament of Holy Communion. By contrast, the single peak of Roman Catholic worship is Holy Communion (although this includes the reading of the Gospel), while in other Protestant communions the Word read and preached is superior.

With regard to the nature of the Communion, the Anglican Church has a variety of views. Anglicanism is not a denomination, as such, but a catholic (meaning universal) alternative to the Roman Church. Accordingly, there is no single required belief about what happens to the bread and wine in Holy Communion. Some Anglo-Catholics believe that the body and blood are present along with the elements of bread and wine. More evangelical Anglicans recall the death and sacrifice of Jesus, while denying that anything materially changes in the nature of the bread and wine. But both groups believe in the real presence of Jesus with them while they worship him.

This is the glory of the Anglican position on Holy Communion. Worshippers are *communing together*, sharing a relationship with one another as they 'feast on the Lamb of God', rather than being concerned over the actual nature of the presence. This is a distinctive view of Holy Communion, and it is a major part of what makes the Anglican Church historically 'catholic' but separate from Roman Catholic and from other Protestant beliefs. Anglican views on this development fall into two (or some would say three) groups:

The first group assumes that the words of Jesus were meant to be taken at face value and believe that once the bread and wine have been consecrated, Jesus is present and there is more to these elements than merely bread and wine. This is the belief (often called 'transubstantiation' by Roman Catholics) - that the bread and wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of the risen Jesus; (or called 'consubstantiation' by Anglo-Catholics) - that the Body and Blood of Jesus are literally present along with the Bread and Wine. In either case there is the belief that, the bread/body can be displayed in a special holder called a 'monstrance', and people may come to pray and worship Jesus in its presence throughout the following days, or to display the elements in a procession.

The second group assumes that while Jesus said that this (bread) was his body, he never meant his words to be taken literally. Instead, its members apply reason and reflection to the mystery of Holy Communion and observe their time together as one for reflection and recall, and so participate in the sacrifice and presence of Jesus.

The Anglican Church's view of the 'Real Presence' forms a bridge between these two viewpoints, largely occupying the middle ground. While not accepting the interpretation held by the Roman Catholic church, it still holds to the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, without needing or wishing to clarify whether he is present physically or just through an act of remembrance.

a) p 93; b) pp 49, 54.

More information at ...

1. [Anglican Eucharistic Theology](#)
2. [Text for celebration of day of thanksgiving for the institution of the Holy Eucharist](#)
3. [Two Anglican views of Holy Communion](#)
4. [An Anglican Visual View of Holy Communion](#)
5. [Can we provide Holy Communion over the Web?](#)

Thursday, 20 June 2019

THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (CORPUS ET SANGUINIS CHRISTI)

Christian (Roman Catholic) In some countries, including England & Wales, the festival is celebrated on June 23, the Sunday after Trinity Sunday.

The festival of Corpus Christi, a Latin phrase that refers to the body of Jesus, celebrates the institution of the Mass/Eucharist. It falls 60 days after Easter. The feast is celebrated in the Latin Church either on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday or it may be transferred to the following Sunday. Its purpose is to commemorate the institution by Jesus of the Holy Eucharist during the Last Supper on the day before his crucifixion, as described in the gospels. It has been celebrated by Catholic Christians ever since 1246

At the end of the Mass, it is customary for there to be a Procession of the Blessed Sacrament (often outdoors), followed by the 'Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament'. Bread and wine are usually offered during Holy Communion/the Eucharist on Corpus Christi. It is also known as the Day of Wreaths, since in the ancient world it was customary to scatter flowers in the path of important people as a sign of respect and reverence, and this custom was adopted by the Church to honour the Blessed Sacrament as it was being carried in procession on this festival day.

In Spain and Provence the processions often feature saints and characters from the Bible as they follow a path decorated with wreaths and flowers. In Portugal the feast is known as *Dia de Corpo de Deus* and since medieval times has been one of the major religious observances. In the city of Ponta Delgada, in the Azores, the people make a flower-petal carpet almost three quarters of a mile long for the procession of the clergy and priests.

In Germany Corpus Christi is celebrated with colourful processions where the sacrament and other holy symbols are carried throughout villages, towns and even on boats on lakes, while streets are decorated with flowers and greenery. Children dressed in white wear wreaths of flowers accompanied by women in regional costume.

The feast was introduced to England from Belgium at some stage between 1318 and 1325. Before the Reformation, there was a famous procession in London on this day. Although the feast of Corpus Christi is no longer observed as a public holiday in England, there was a time when the city guilds were involved in processions and often performed what was known as 'Corpus Christi' plays. In medieval times it was a time for the performance of mystery plays.

Symbols that portray the feast may include images of: the host (the consecrated bread and wine); the chalice (to depict the Blood of Jesus); an altar; a ciborium, which is a chalice-like container used to store the consecrated host of the sacrament; or the simple elements of bread and wine.

Corpus Christi is primarily celebrated by the Catholic Church, but it is also included in the calendar of a number of Anglican churches, such as the Church of England. The feast is celebrated by some Anglo-Catholic parishes even in provinces of the Anglican Communion that do not officially include it in their calendars. In English-speaking Roman Catholic parishes, the feast is known as 'The Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)'. In the Church of England it is known as 'The Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion (Corpus Christi)'.

For Catholics the change of the substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Jesus and of the substance of wine into the substance of his Blood is known as Transubstantiation. They hold that the changes are brought about in the eucharistic prayer through the efficacy of the word of Jesus and the action of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, the outward characteristics of the bread and wine remain unaltered. (See June 20 above for further commentary on Anglican views of the Eucharist.)

a) p 93; b) pp 49, 54.

More information at ...

1. [New Advent: Feast of Corpus Christi](#)
2. [Time and date: Festival of Corpus Christi](#)
3. [Santa Rosario: The Sacrament of the Eucharist - a Compendium of the Catechism](#)
4. [Corpus Christi at Arundel Cathedral](#)
5. [Social Journalist describes Corpus Christi](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 21 June, 2019

MIDSUMMER SOLSTICE Wiccan/Pagan

Friday, 21 June, 2019

SUMMER SOLSTICE (Alban Heruin or Alban Hefin) Druid

The summer solstice is the festival of Midsummer, sometimes called Litha. The light of the sun is at the height of its power. It is a time of plenty and celebration.

More information at ...

1. [Witchvox: Midsummer/Summer Solstice](#)
2. [Almanac - Summer Solstice](#)
3. [BBC: Summer Solstice](#)
4. [Summer Solstice at Stonehenge, in pictures](#)
5. [When is the Longest Day? When is the Shortest Day?](#)

Friday, 21 June, 2019

WORLD HUMANIST DAY

This is a Humanist holiday, celebrated annually around the world but especially in America, on the June solstice. It is seen as a day for spreading awareness of [Humanism](#) as a philosophical [life stance](#) and as a means for effecting change in the world. It is also seen as a time for Humanists to gather socially and so to promote the positive values of Humanism.

Humanists are people who believe in a natural universe as understood through reason, people who wish to live ethical and meaningful lives without faith in the supernatural, and people who care for their fellow human being. Humanists are informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion.

The manner in which World Humanist Day is celebrated varies considerably among local Humanist groups, reflecting the individuality and non-dogmatism of Humanism as a whole. Whilst the event might be a simple gathering, such as a dinner or picnic, with ample time for both socialising and reflection, the method of celebration is left to individual Humanists. Some groups develop intricate social rituals, music, and reflective proceedings which highlight the metaphorical symbolism of the solstice and the light of knowledge that brings us out of the darkness of ignorance.

More information at ...

1. [Leonardo da Vinci - Humanist, Scientist, Naturalist](#)
2. [Secular Seasons - World Humanist Day](#)
3. [Human Rights and Equality in Broadcasting](#)
4. [iHumanism: World Humanism Day](#)
5. [World Humanist Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 23 June 2019

THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (CORPUS ET SANGUINIS CHRISTI)
Christian (Roman Catholic) In some countries, including England & Wales, the festival is celebrated on this, the Sunday after Trinity Sunday, June 23. Elsewhere it is celebrated on Thursday, June 20, 2019. See June 20 for details.

Monday, 24 June, 2019

MIDSUMMER DAY *National*

One of the four Quarter Days in the UK legal calendar

More information at ...

1. [Midsummer Madness - Summer Solstice parties around the world](#)
2. [Celebrating the Swedish Way: Midsummer Day](#)
3. [Humour: Midsummer's Day - June24th](#)
4. [Images for Midsummer's Day](#)
5. [Britannica summarises Midsummer's Eve](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

JULY 2019

Nana Asma'ū

Here is the seventh of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Nana Asma'ū died in 1864 at the age of 71 in Northern Nigeria. She was the daughter of the Sultan who led the creation of the Sokoto caliphate – one of largest African empires of the time with a population around 10 million. In her own right she made adult education acceptable, especially (but not only) for Muslim women. She set up a school for both men and women, and then the Yan Taru organisation of travelling teachers she'd trained to go out and teach in towns and villages, often using lesson plans, poetry, and creative mnemonic devices which she herself had devised. She was mother of six children. Small wonder that she is still remembered as a pioneer educationalist, and not only by fellow Muslims and Sufis.

<https://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/nana-asmau-teacher-of-the-century>

<http://mvslim.com/know-nana-asmau-early-islamic-feminist-icon>

<http://www.amazingwomeninhistory.com/nana-asmau-princess-poet-reformer-muslim-womens-education>

<https://almadinainstitute.org/blog/muslim-women-in-leadership-nana-asmau-daughter-of-the-shehu>

<http://www.yantaru.com/books/The%20Essential%20Nana%20Asma'u.pdf>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCTiOb3M_64

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/13423>

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 1 July, 2018

JASHN-E TIRGAN (TIR JASHAN) *Zoroastrian (Iranian)*

Jashn-e Tirgan is an ancient quarter year summer festival, celebrated about three months after the spring NoRuz. Tirgan is devoted to the divinity Tir and is associated with the dog-star Sirius and the coming of the rains in Iran and the fertility they bring.

On this day it is customary to visit the Fire Temple to give thanks to Ahura Mazda, to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, listen to stories of how the boundaries of Iran were established in antiquity with its Central Asian neighbour Turan (now Turkmenistan) by an archer shooting an arrow, share a community meal, play with 'rainbow' bracelets made of seven coloured silks, splash each other with water, and dance and make merry.

a) pp 254-255; b) p 131.

More information at ...

1. [Cais SOAS - Celebrations - Jashn-e-Tirgan](#)
2. [Bintudaddy: Tirgan Iranian Summer Festival \(Yeki Bood Yeki Nabood\)](#)
3. [Zoroastrian Heritage - Tirgan](#)
4. [Images for Jashn-e-Tirgan](#)
5. [Iran Review: Arash the Archer and the Festival of Rain \(Jashn-e Tirgan\)](#)

Thursday, 4 July 2019

RATHA YATRA *Hindu*

'Chariot journey'. This is observed most notably at Puri in the Indian state of Orissa, where processions of thousands of devotees pull huge waggons (*rathas*) supporting images of Krishna. He is known under the name of 'Jagannath', (Lord of the Universe), from which the English term 'juggernaut' comes. Krishna is attended on his journey by his brother and sister. The festival and others like it are celebrated in Britain with processions through various parts of London on appropriate Sundays.

a) p 123; b) pp 68-69, 75, 79-80.

More information at ...

1. [Rath Yatra - the Chariot Festival of Puri](#)
2. [ISKCON UK: Ratha Yatra - Festival of the Chariots](#)
3. [Harekrnsna: The Ratha Yatra](#)
4. [Rath Yatra: The Chariot Festival of Puri, with photos](#)
5. [Swaminarayan: Rath Yatra](#)

Saturday, 6 July 2019

CHOKOR (also CHO KOR DU CHEN) Buddhist

Chökhör Düchen, the festival of 'Turning the Wheel of Dharma', is one of the four major Tibetan Buddhist holidays. It is a Tibetan and Nepalese festival that commemorates the first teaching (*the turning of the wheel of law*) given by the historical Buddha. It is a colourful and relaxed mid-summer festival, when statues of the Buddha and copies of the scriptures, engraved on narrow, rectangular wooden blocks, are carried round the district with music and jollity, symbolising the promulgation of the Buddha's teaching. The whole community, clerical and lay, male and female, joins in the processions and the picnics.

For eight weeks after his enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, the Buddha did not give any teaching, even though Buddhist belief holds that one attains enlightenment in order to help other sentient beings. The normal explanation of this suggests that at that time there were no beings present who had sufficient 'good *karma*' to receive such important teachings from the Buddha. Other stories suggest that the Indian gods Indra and Brahma presented him with gifts and pleaded with him to begin his teaching. In the event the Buddha 'Turned the Wheel of Dharma' for the first time, at the Deer Park in Sarnath, near Varanasi, by expounding the 'Four Noble Truths'.

He gave this first teaching to five of his companions from his earlier time of practising asceticism. They had previously left him on the banks of the Niranjana river after becoming disillusioned with him for giving up his practice of austerities. When they saw him once again, they were overwhelmed by his presence, and their curiosity was such that they could not resist asking him to explain what had happened. The Buddha taught them the Four Noble Truths which have remained the basis of all traditions of Buddhism. He talked with them all through the night, and when morning came, these first five students took refuge with him in the Three Jewels: the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* and the *Sangha*. Together with the Buddha, they became the first members of the *Sangha*, the community of practitioners who follow the teachings of the Buddha, and they became enlightened *arhats*. At this time of year Buddhists today reflect on and seek to follow their example.

45 years after that first gathering, 1250 enlightened personal disciples of the Buddha came spontaneously to the Bamboo Grove at Rajagaha on the full moon of Magha (usually in late February or early March). This was one of the earliest large gatherings of Buddhists, and this was when the Buddha taught the principles of the *Dharma* and set out his teachings to the assembled *arahats* (enlightened monks) for them to study, learn and follow.

'*Duchen*' means 'great occasion' and like Chotrul Düchen, Saga Dawa Duchen, and Lhabab Düchen, Chokor Duchen is regarded as a 'ten million multiplier' day, multiplying the effects of all positive and negative actions ten million times! Together these four major Tibetan Buddhist holidays mark the four events known as the 'great deeds' of the Buddha. The first is Chotrul Duchen, and celebrates the time when the Buddha is said to have displayed a different miracle each day to spur on his disciples. Next is Saga Dawa, which remembers the Buddha's enlightenment, death and *parinirvana*. The third is Chokhor Duchen, which commemorates the Buddha's first sermon and the teaching of the Four Noble Truths.

In Tibet Chokor Duchen is a day of pilgrimage when believers visit particularly holy spots to leave offerings of incense and prayer flags. The whole community, monks and lay people alike, join in processions bearing statues of the Buddha and copies of the scriptures. They make much use of *Chokhors* or prayer wheels, which are common religious objects in Tibet, a normal part of daily life for all Tibetan Buddhists. These hand held wheels contain hollow wooden or metal cylinders attached to a handle. When turned, these are believed to spread spiritual blessing. Mantras - such as *Om Mani Padme Hum* - believed to evoke the attention and blessings of Shakyamuni, the Buddha of Compassion - may be printed or etched on the cylinder, and each revolution is said to equal one repetition or prayer. Larger prayer wheels are also lined up on racks along the paths circling the monasteries or at other sites so that passing pilgrims can set them into motion. More information at ...

1. [chokhor duchen-one of the four great Tibetan holy days](#)
2. [Chokor du Chen – Buddha Multiplying Day](#)
3. [Mythic Maps: Chokor Duchen](#)
4. [Tibet Travel: Festivals - Chokor Duchen](#)
5. [Blogspot: Dream of my guru on Chokhor Duchen](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 8 July 2019 – Wednesday, 17th July 2019 (Kadmi)
Monday, 11 March 2019 – Wednesday, 20 March 2019 (Iranian)
Wednesday, 7th August 2019 – Friday, 16th August 2019 (Shahenshai)
FRAVARDIGAN / MUKTAD Zoroastrian

The Fravardigan festival (the festival of the *fravashis*), popularly known as *Muktad* (All Souls), commences ten days before NoRuz and is the last festival of the old year. The Zoroastrian day commences at sunrise and not midnight, and so during sunrise on the first day of the festival the immortal souls, together with their *fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors, artistically depicted as half man/half bird), are welcomed by name by the Zoroastrian *Mobeds* or *Magi* (priests).

For ten days they reside in the place of worship, hovering around a table full of metal vases, each specifically earmarked for an individual family and containing white flowers. They leave the physical world after the last ceremony, held on the tenth evening, but before the dawn of NoRuz. The designated priest - as a farewell gesture - will then empty the water from one of the metal vases, which he will also turn upside down, signifying that it is time for the immortal souls and the *fravashis* to return to the spiritual world.

Theologically Fravardigan is the most important Zoroastrian festival after NoRuz, and, since it deals with one's departed ancestors, many Zoroastrians regard it to be their holiest festival. This linking of the past with the present and the future is typical of much of Zoroastrian life.

During these ten days Zoroastrians often take time off from work, pray extensively, recite the five *Gathas* (hymns composed by Zarathushtra) and ensure their houses are thoroughly cleaned. They prepare daily samples of sacred food enjoyed by their departed ancestors while still alive, and take these to the place of worship, to be tasted by them during the daily ceremonies. This ritually consecrated food, along with chosen fruits, is then shared by the living in the special *Hamaspahmaidyem Gahambar*, a communal feast celebrated after the ceremony is over.

a) pp 250-252; b) pp 129-130, 144.

More information at ...

1. [The nature and meaning of Muktad](#)
2. [Muktad](#)
3. [Zoroastrian Heritage Institute - Pateti](#)
4. [Images for Fravardigan](#)
5. [Frashogard - What to do and pray during the Muktad](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 10 July, 2019

ANNIVERSARY OF THE MARTYRDOM OF THE BAB Baha'i

This day recalls the death of the *Bab*, executed by firing squad in Tabriz, Persia, at noon on July 9th, 1850. Baha'is commemorate his death at noon with readings and prayers from the Baha'i Scriptures. It has become a holy day of rest when Baha'is should refrain from work.

The Báb (the word means 'Gate' - that through which another would come) was the title adopted by 'Ali Muhammad Shirāzi, a 19th century Persian religious leader and founder of the Bábi movement. He and his followers were persecuted by the religious leaders of his country and this culminated in his being publicly shot by a firing squad in 1850. However, Bahá'ís believe that his martyrdom was the occasion of a miracle witnessed by thousands. They hold that the first attempt to shoot the Báb resulted only in severing the ropes by which he was bound and freeing him so that he could conclude an important conversation with a follower; after the Báb's death his followers almost unanimously accepted Mírzá Ḥusayn-`Alí Núrí (Bahá'u'lláh - the name means "The Glory of God") as their new religious leader.

The commemoration of the Martyrdom of the Báb is one of nine days in the year when Bahá'ís should take time off work or school to be able to participate in religious gathering. His body is now buried in a magnificent tomb in Hairs.

a) pp 26-27; b) pp 19, 21-22.

More information at ...

1. [Baha'i World News Service: Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Bab](#)
2. [Baha'i Blog: The Martyrdom of the Bab and Jesus Christ](#)
3. [Baha'i Library - The Martyrdom of the Bab](#)
4. [Susan Gammage: Holy Day Celebration for the Martyrdom of the Bab](#)
5. [Huffington Post - Martyrdom of the Bab](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 13 July, 2019 – Monday, 15 July, 2019

O-BON Japanese (in Japan – not Tokyo - see 13 August)

A Japanese festival when the spirits of the departed are welcomed back home with feasting and dancing. Fires are often lit to illuminate their arrival and departure. Celebrations in rural areas may take place one month earlier.

a) pp 162-163; b) pp 82, 86-87, 89.

More information at ...

1. [A Guide to Japan's Festival - O-bon](#)
2. [The Japan Guy: What is Obon?](#)
3. [Kids Web Japan; Bon Holidays](#)
4. [O-Bon in Pictures](#)
5. [Diplomat: Obon - Japan Welcomes the Ancestors \(And Other Spirits Too\)](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

***Tuesday, 16 July 2019 / Wednesday, 17 July 2019**

ASALHA PUJA /DHAMMA DAY Buddhist

Dhammacakka day - 'The turning of the wheel of teaching'. This is a Theravada celebration of the First Proclamation by Gautama to five ascetics in the Deer Park near Benares. Although he was initially reluctant to teach, he finally rejoined his five friends, with whom he had previously spent several years travelling throughout the Ganges plain, and in their presence he gained enlightenment. He then spoke to them at length and taught them the Middle Way, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths, the essence of all subsequent Buddhist teaching. He also ordained them as his followers, the first step towards the foundation of the *Sangha* of Buddhist monks.

The main activity that takes place on this day is the chanting of the discourse known as the *Dhamma Cakka Sutta* (the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Truth). This would usually be in the original Pali language. The month of Asalha marks the beginning of the three months long retreat period for Buddhist monks, a period of meditation and restraint, though it is also a time when lay Buddhists offer a variety of gifts to the monks. It is also the month in which the Buddha's son, Rahula, was born.

The Tibetan festival of Chokor Duchon corresponds to Asalha Puja in many respects.

More information at ...

1. [Buddhist Festivals - Asalha Puja](#)
2. [Everything you need to know about Buddhist Asalha Puja day](#)
3. [My Triple Blog: Asalha Puja Day](#)
4. [Asalha Puja in Pictures](#)
5. [Battaya Mail: Thai Buddhists nationwide perform religious rites on Asalha Puja Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 18 July 2019

NAVROZE / NO RUZ *Zoroastrian (Kadmi)*

New Year's Day on the Shenshai Calendar. In the tenth century a group of Zoroastrians fled from Iran and were given religious sanctuary by the Hindus of Western India, where they became known as Parsis (or Persians). During the twentieth century the Zoroastrians of Iran have revised their calendar to take account of the leap year, while the Parsis of India have continued following the traditional imperial or Shenshai calendar. By the twentieth century the Parsis of India had become the largest group in the world to practise Zoroastrianism, and in the twenty first century over 95% of Zoroastrians in the UK are Parsis. Like their Indian counterparts, they celebrate two new years – giving more time for making merry!

a) pp 252-253; b) 127-128, 130-132, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Zoroastrian Heritage - Papeti - Navroze/No Ruz](#)
2. [Navroz - the Ismaili celebration](#)
3. [Navroze Special - A Parsi Feast awaits you](#)
4. [Parsi good will messages for Navroze](#)
5. [Iran Chamber Society: No-Rooz, The Iranian New Year at Present Times](#)

Tuesday, 23 July, 2019

BIRTHDAY OF HAILE SELASSIE I *Rastafarian*

This is one of the holiest days of the Ethiopian year. It is celebrated widely throughout Ethiopia. Wherever Rastafarians live, they rejoice to honour the birthday of their king with *Nyahbinghi* drumming, hymns and prayers. Born in 1892 as Tafari Mahonnen, Ras Tafari ruled Ethiopia as regent and crown prince from 1916 to 1928, and in 1930 was crowned emperor. This was when he became his Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I, a name that means 'Power of the Trinity'.

Haile Selassie was Ethiopia's 225th and last emperor, serving from 1930 until his overthrow in 1974 by the Marxist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam. He traced his line back to Menelik I, who was credited with being the child of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. His birth had been foretold by astrologers, who foretold the great drought that started in 1889 and was broken at the moment of the child's birth, thus confirming his identity and destiny. His teachers were astounded at the depth of his knowledge and his understanding of ancient Indic religious texts. It is claimed that he could also converse with animals, and that savage beasts became docile in his presence. He was a skilled linguist, who learnt to read and write in Amharic and Ge'ez - and also in French.

For a country trying to gain its foothold in the world and seeking to curry favour with the West, the progressive Ras Tafari came to symbolize the hopes and dreams of Ethiopia's younger population. In 1923 he led Ethiopia into the League of Nations. The following year, he travelled to Europe, becoming the first Ethiopian ruler to go abroad.

Many of the Jamaican descendants of former slaves regarded Ethiopia as the symbol of all Africa, so the crowning of the new emperor was regarded as a highly propitious event. The Rastafari movement emerged in the 1930s, in large part inspired by the vision of Marcus Garvey and focussed on the belief that Haile Selassie was a divine being and the redeemer of the black people. Although the anticipated mass repatriation to Africa has not occurred, the movement has spread throughout much of the world, largely through immigration and the interest generated by reggae music - most notably, that of Bob Marley. For the more than a million Rastafarians worldwide, the anniversary of the birth of Haile Selassie is considered one of the most significant days of the Rasta year.

More information at ...

1. [The birth and childhood of Haile Selassie I](#)
2. [Biography of Haile Selassie I](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Birthday of Haile Selassie](#)
4. [Photos of Haile Selassie I](#)
5. [Brainy Quotes: Haile Selassie I](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 23 July 2019 Zoroastrian (Kadmi)

Tuesday, 26 March 2019 Zoroastrian (Iranian)

KHORDAD SAL Zoroastrian

Khordad Sal is the Birthday of Zarathushtra and falls on the sixth day following NoRuz. *Khordad* means perfection and the festival of Khordad Sal symbolically celebrates the birthday of Prophet Zarathushtra. It is customary on this day to visit the Fire Temple, to give thanks to Ahura Mazda for giving humanity the Prophet Zarathushtra, to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, to listen to stories of the miraculous birth and life of Prophet Zarathushtra, and to share in a happy community meal, a drink and a dance.

a) pp 253, 255; b) pp 128-132.

More information at ...

1. [Observe the Greater Noruz on Khordad Sal](#)
2. [A History of Khordad Sal](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Khordad Sal](#)
4. [Sakshigopal: Happy Khordad Sal! Birthday Day of Zoroaster!](#)
5. [Khordad Sal celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Lord Zoroaster](#)

AUGUST 2019

Nicholas of Cusa

Here is the eighth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Nicholas of Cusa died in August 1464 at the age of 63. All of his early life - family, school and university - were in Germany, and his later life was based in Italy or roving therefrom. His research and writings, going back nearly six hundred years, show that many of today's ideas and interests in astronomy, philosophy and the Christian faith were already under discussion: that the universe is not necessarily earth centred, that our sense of time is relative, that ecumenical co-operation between the different churches should be a priority, and that, especially from a Christian point of view, other religions are also important. For him God is at the extremities of human reasoning, at the coincidence of opposites (such as immanence within and transcendence beyond), at both the centre and circumference of the ordered universe. For him, provision of care for the aged is of first importance, to the extent that he set up an old people's home and endowed it in perpetuity.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/nicolas>

<https://gohighbrow.com/philosophy-of-nicholas-of-cusa>

<https://catholicexchange.com/nicholas-of-cusa-a-medieval-man-for-modern-times>

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nicholas_of_Cusa

<http://www.keplersdiscovery.com/Cusanus.html>

http://www.azquotes.com/author/21484-Nicholas_of_Cusa

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2017/02/nicholas-cusa-diversity-religions>

http://www.schillerinstitute.org/transl/cusa_p_of_f.html

<http://jasper-hopkins.info/IslamandtheWest.pdf>

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/20950>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MP9dXnaHFWA>

<https://www.facebook.com/CusanusNicolaus>

Thursday, 1 August, 2019

LAMMAS/LUGHNASADH (pronounced Loo-nassa) Wiccan

LUGHNASADH Pagan

Lughnasadh, otherwise called *Lammas*, is the time of the corn harvest, when Pagans reap whatever they have sown and when they celebrate the fruits of the mystery of Nature. At Lughnasadh, Pagans give thanks for the bounty of the Goddess as Queen of the Land. Lammas is the first harvest, a time for gathering in and giving thanks for abundance; then Mabon or the Autumn Equinox is the Second Harvest of Fruit; and Samhain is the third and Final Harvest of Nuts and Berries.

With the coming of Christianity to the Celtic lands, the old festival of Lughnasadh took on Christian symbolism. Loaves of bread were baked from the first of the harvested grain and placed on the church altar on the first Sunday of August. The Christianized name for the feast of Lughnasadh is Lammas which means "loaf mass".

But this is also the major festival of Lugh, or Lug, the great Celtic Sun King and God of Light. August is His sacred month when He initiated great festivities in honour of His mother, Tailtiu. Feasting, market fairs, games and bonfire celebrations are the order of the day. Circle dancing, reflecting the movement of the sun in sympathetic magic, is popular, as are all community gatherings. August is considered an auspicious month for handfastings and weddings.

At Lammas the Goddess is in Her aspect as Grain Mother, Harvest Mother, Harvest Queen, Earth Mother, Ceres and Demeter. Demeter, as Corn Mother, represents the ripe corn of this year's harvest and her daughter Persephone/Kore represents the grain - the seed which drops back deep into the dark earth, hidden throughout the winter, to reappear in the spring as new growth. So as the grain harvest is gathered in, there is food to feed the community through the winter and within that harvest is the seed of next year's rebirth, regeneration and harvest. The Grain Mother is ripe and full; heavily pregnant she carries the seed of the new year's Sun God within her. This is the deep core meaning of Lammas and evokes the fullness and fulfilment of the present harvest, holding at its heart the seed of all future harvests.

But underlying this is the knowledge that the bounty and energy of Lugh, of the Sun, is now beginning to wane. It is a time when the year changes and shifts. Active growth is slowing down and the darker days of winter and reflection are beckoning. There is tension here. For Lugh, the Sun God, the God of the Harvest, the Green Man, or John Barleycorn, surrenders his life with the cutting of the corn. In the form of John Barleycorn, he is the living Spirit of the corn, or grain. As the corn is cut so John Barleycorn is cut down also. He surrenders his life so that others may be sustained by the grain, and so that the life of the community can continue. He is both eaten as the bread and is then reborn as the seed returns to the earth.

More information at ...

1. [The goddess and the green man - Lammas](#)
2. [Pagan/Wiccan: All About Lammas](#)
3. [The White Goddess: Lammas](#)
4. [Images for the Festival of Lammas](#)
5. [Mything Links: Lammas, Lughnasadh](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 3 August 2019 – Monday, 12 August 2019

FIRST TEN DAYS OF DHUL-HIJJAH *Muslim*

For Muslims the first 10 days of the month of Dhul-Hijjah are held to be especially holy when good deeds are particularly rewarded by God. These days encompass the allotted days for the performance of the Hajj (pilgrimage) and the first day of Eid-ul-Adha (the feast of sacrifice).

More information at ...

1. [The Blessed Days of Dhul Hijjah](#)
2. [ICNA: Virtues of the First 10 Days of 'Dhul-Hijja'](#)
3. [The First Ten Days of Dhul Hijjah: Days of Virtue and Righteous Deeds](#)
4. [Virtues of the First Ten Days of Dhul-Hijjah](#)
5. [Islamic Relief: The Virtues of Dhul Hijjah](#)

Tuesday, 6 August 2019

THE TRANSFIGURATION *Christian (for Orthodox Julian Calendar see 19 August)*

This festival commemorates the occasion when Jesus went up a mountain with three of his disciples, Peter, James and John; here, as his death approached, they saw in a vision how his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white; they witnessed him in conversation with Moses and Elijah, and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased – listen to him'. For many Christians this account confirms the divine nature of Jesus.

For Orthodox Christians this is an especially important festival, pointing to Christ as both human and divine. Although Moses and Elijah had died centuries before, they could both live again in the presence of the Son of God, implying that a similar return to life can apply to all who face death.

Most scholars date the transfiguration of Jesus to the time of the Festival of Booths, the Jewish feast of God dwelling with his people. The celebration of the event in the Church became for Christians the New Testamental fulfilment of the Jewish feast of Sukkot in a way remarkably similar to the influence of the Jewish feasts of Passover and Pentecost on Christian celebrations.

The feast of the Transfiguration is currently observed on the 6th of August. The summer celebration of the feast lends itself well to the concept of transfiguration. The blessing on this day of grapes, as well as other fruits and vegetables, relates effectively to the paradisaical view of God's Kingdom where the whole earth will be transformed by the glory Jesus reveals here to his disciples.

The timing of the transfiguration is significant in the ministry of Jesus. Matthew 15:29 tells of the healing of the multitudes and the feeding of the 4000. This apparently prompted the Pharisees to wonder if Jesus was the Messiah, for they came to him asking for a sign (16:1ff). Jesus knew the disciples were harbouring the same expectations of him (cf. Luke 22:37-38 and Acts 1:6), and posed the famous question 'But who do you say that I am?'

Peter's answer in Matthew 16:16 was a great break-through, and Jesus commended Peter for it (v.17). He wanted his disciples to believe that he was the Son of God, the Messiah. Then, immediately after Peter's confession, Jesus announced, for the first time in an explicit way, his coming death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21), indicating the nature of his Messiahship.

It is in this context of this discovery made by the disciples that the transfiguration story falls. Six days went by after Peter's confrontation with Jesus. Then he took Peter, James, and John up 'to a high mountain' (possibly Mount Tabor?) where they witnessed a wonderful sight: Jesus was glorified before their eyes. (Matt. 17:2).

Then there appeared Moses and Elijah. These two characters fit perfectly into this scene. Moses was the great lawgiver in Israelite history, but he was also the first of God's great prophets (cf. Deut 18:14ff). Elijah was a great prophet too. Furthermore, both of them saw an appearance of God in their lifetimes (Moses: Exod 33:17ff; Elijah: 1 Kings 19:9ff), and both of these occurred on a mountain (Mt. Sinai). Both of them, like Jesus, had performed mighty works in the name of the Lord God of Israel, and both had experienced, to some degree, the rejection of their own people. These two characters have symbolic significance. Together they represent the Law and the Prophets, both of which pointed forwards to Jesus (cf. Rom. 3:21) and to his future suffering and exaltation.

Truly this is a festival to celebrate.

Matthew 17:1-17, Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36.

a) p 101; b) pp 106-107, 109.

More information at ...

1. [The Expository Files: The Transfiguration](#)
2. [The Orthodox Church in America - The Transfiguration](#)
3. [NC Register: 10 things you need to know about Jesus' Transfiguration](#)
4. [The Transfiguration, by Duccio](#)
5. [About Catholicism: The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ](#)

Wednesday, 7 August 2019

HERD BOY AND WEAVING MAID FESTIVAL / QIXIJIIE / CH'I HOU CHIEH Chinese

This Double Seven festival perpetuates an ancient Chinese (and Japanese) folk tale of two stars, one on either side of the Heavenly River (the Milky Way). They are held to have been a herd boy and a heavenly weaving maid who had married but were then separated by a river (formed by the use of a magic hairpin) when the maid was summoned to return to heaven. The lovers are allowed a reunion once a year on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, when a flock of magpies forms a bridge across the Heavenly River. But if it rains on that day, the river overflows and sweeps away the bridge, so preventing their meeting for a whole year. Women traditionally pray for clear skies on the night of the seventh day of the month.

There are several, varied versions of the story, most of them telling how the poor young farmer who looked after his herd of cows was taken to a lake where several women were bathing. He was told to steal the red clothing of the one who served a royal majesty by skilfully weaving clothes. The others fled but the weaver was promised the return of her clothes if she would marry the herd boy. After several happy years together she was forced to return to her heavenly home to continue her weaving, whereas he was trapped on the wrong side of the waters.

These legends portray and seek to explain several of the groupings of stars in the Milky Way, relating them to the various levels humans occupy in the social order and illustrating that the path to love is not always smooth.

a) p 70; b) p 43.

More information at ...

1. [Tai Chi Chuan Centre - Weaving Girl](#)
2. [World of Tales: Chinese Folk Tales - The Herd Boy and the Weaving Maiden](#)
3. [The Herd Boy and the Weaving Maid, and other Oriental Folk Tales](#)
4. [You Tube - The Cow Herd and the Weaving Maid and other stories](#)
5. [China Travel: Double Seventh Festival - Herd Boy and Weaving Maid](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 7th August 2019 – Friday, 16th August 2019 (Shahenshai)

Monday, 11 March 2019 – Wednesday, 20 March 2019 (Iranian Zoroastrian)

Monday, 8 July 2019 – Wednesday 17th July 2019 (Kadmi)

FRAVARDIGAN / MUKTAD Zoroastrian

The Fravardigan festival (the festival of the *fravashis*), popularly known as *Muktad* (All Souls), commences ten days before NoRuz and is the last festival of the old year. The Zoroastrian day commences at sunrise and not midnight, and so during sunrise on the first day of the festival the immortal souls, together with their *fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors, artistically depicted as half man/half bird), are welcomed by name by the Zoroastrian *Mobeds* or *Magi* (priests).

For ten days they reside in the place of worship, hovering around a table full of metal vases, each specifically earmarked for an individual family and containing white flowers. They leave the physical world after the last ceremony, held on the tenth evening, but before the dawn of NoRuz. The designated priest - as a farewell gesture - will then empty the water from one of the metal vases, which he will also turn upside down, signifying that it is time for the immortal souls and the *fravashis* to return to the spiritual world.

Theologically Fravardigan is the most important Zoroastrian festival after NoRuz, and, since it deals with one's departed ancestors, many Zoroastrians regard it to be their holiest festival. This linking of the past with the present and the future is typical of much of Zoroastrian life.

During these ten days Zoroastrians often take time off from work, pray extensively, recite the five *Gathas* (hymns composed by Zarathushtra) and ensure their houses are thoroughly cleaned. They prepare daily samples of sacred food enjoyed by their departed ancestors while still alive, and take these to the place of worship, to be tasted by them during the daily ceremonies. This ritually consecrated food, along with chosen fruits, is then shared by the living in the special *Hamaspahmaidyem Gahambar*, a communal feast celebrated after the ceremony is over.

a) pp 250-252; b) pp 129-130, 144.

More information at ...

1. [The nature and meaning of Muktad](#)
2. [Muktad](#)
3. [Zoroastrian Heritage Institute - Pateti](#)
4. [Images for Fravardigan](#)
5. [Frashogard - What to do and pray during the Muktad](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, August 10 2019 – Wednesday, August 14 2019

HAJJ / PILGRIMAGE TO MAKKAH (8th to 12th Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim

Hajj is an annual religious pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) undertaken each year by 2-3 million people. All Muslims are required to make this pilgrimage once in their lifetime (although there is no prohibition on making the pilgrimage more than once). Those who cannot afford to do so, or are prevented through ill-health may be excused. A series of ritual acts are performed by the pilgrims during the first two days of Hajj, followed by the three day long festival of Eid al-Adha which is celebrated in Makkah. *Umrah* is a separate and smaller pilgrimage involving the events of the first two days of hajj that can be completed at any time of the year, but can be preceded or followed by the rest of hajj if pilgrims so wish.

The origins of hajj date back to the Prophet Ibrahim, and it brings together Muslims of all schools, races and tongues for one of life's most moving spiritual experiences. According to the Qur'an, it was Ibrahim who, together with his son Isma'il (Ishmael), built the Ka'bah, 'the House of God,' the focal point toward which Muslims turn in their worship five times each day. Later, the Prophet Muhammad instructed believers in the rituals of the hajj, partly through his own example, but also with the support of his Companions. It is the fifth of the five 'pillars' of Islam, the central religious duties of the believer.

The Ka'bah, a large rectangular cube shaped building, covered in a black mantle which is decorated with elaborate gold calligraphy, is the focal point of all Muslims' prayers. It stands in the courtyard of Makkah's Sacred Mosque, where at the season of the hajj, the faithful gather for rituals that precede and end their pilgrimage.

For hajj men wear *ihram*, white seamless garments consisting of two pieces of cloth or towelling; one covers the body from waist to ankle and the other is thrown over the shoulder(s). This garb was worn by both Abraham and Muhammad. For *ihram* women generally wear a simple white dress that covers their bodies apart from their face and hands, and a head covering (but not a face veil – the face must be uncovered during hajj). Men's heads must be uncovered, but both men and women may use an umbrella to ward off the sun's rays.

When they arrive in Makkah, pilgrims perform the first essential rite of the hajj: the *tawaf*, the seven-fold anticlockwise circling of the Ka'bah, with a prayer recited during each circuit. While making their circuits, pilgrims may kiss or touch the famous Black Stone. This oval stone, some 11 by 15 inches in size, was damaged over the years and broken into several pieces, but is now held together inside a silver frame. It has a special place in the hearts of Muslims as, according to some traditions, it is the sole remnant of the original structure built by Ibrahim and Isma'il. But perhaps the single most important reason for kissing the stone is that the Prophet did so. After completing the *tawaf*, pilgrims pray, preferably at the Station of Ibrahim, the site where Ibrahim stood while he built the Ka'bah. Then they drink of the water of Zamzam.

Another ritual, sometimes performed later, after the feast of Eid al-Adha, is the *sa'i*, or 'the running.' This commemorates Hagar's frantic search for water to quench Isma'il's thirst. She ran back and forth seven times between two rocky hillocks, al-Safa and al-Marwah, until she found the sacred water known as Zamzam. This water, which sprang forth miraculously under Isma'il's tiny feet, is now enclosed in a marble chamber adjacent to the Ka'bah.

On the first day of the hajj, pilgrims leave Makkah and progress towards Mina, a small uninhabited village east of the city. Here they spend hours meditating and praying, as the Prophet did on his pilgrimages.

On the second day they leave Mina and travel to the plain of Arafat for the *wuquf*, 'the standing' which lasts throughout the rest of the day. This is the central rite of the hajj. Some gather at the Mount of Mercy, where the Prophet delivered his Farewell Sermon, announcing religious, economic, social and political reforms. Here the pilgrims spend hours in worship and supplication. *Continued on next page)*

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Just after sunset, they proceed en masse to Muzdalifah, an open plain about halfway between Arafat and Mina. First they pray and then they collect a fixed number of chickpea-sized pebbles to use on the following days.

Early on the third day they move from Muzdalifah to Mina, where they hurl seven of the pebbles they have previously collected at each of three white pillars that symbolise Satan. They recall the story of Satan's attempt to persuade Ibrahim to disregard God's command to sacrifice his son.

Next each family sacrifices a goat, sheep or some other animal. They give the meat to the poor while, in some cases, they keep a small portion for themselves. This is the start of the celebration of Eid ul-Adha, and is also associated with Ibrahim's readiness to sacrifice his son in accordance with God's wish, and Isma'îl's willingness to accept his fate as the will of God. This act reminds the pilgrim to share worldly goods with those who are less fortunate, and serves as an act of thanksgiving to God. They are now allowed to shed their *ihram* and put on everyday clothes.

While they remain in Mina, pilgrims revisit Makkah to perform another essential rite of the hajj: the farewell *tawaf*, the seven-fold anticlockwise circling of the Ka'bah, with a prayer recited during each circuit. If they have not already done so, they now perform the ritual known as the *sa'i*, 'the running.'

Once these rites are performed, the pilgrims may resume all normal activities. They can, from now on, proudly claim the title of al-*Hajj* or *Hajji* or, in the case of women, *Hajjah*.
More information at ...

1. [Hajj Fact Sheet](#)
2. [Islamic City: Hajj - The Journey of a Lifetime](#)
3. [Why do Millions Gather in Mecca Every Year?](#)
4. [Hajj in Photos](#)
5. [The Guardian - Hajj](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 11 August 2019

YAUM-ARAFAH / THE DAY OF ARAFAT (9th Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim

This day marks the culminating event of the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah. Muslims who are on *Hajj* spend the day in prayer on Mount Arafat to commemorate the end of the revelation of the *Qur'an* to the Prophet. Those not on *Hajj* are also expected to pray and to fast.

Surah 5: 4

pp 223

b) -224; b) *pp116-117*.

More information at ...

1. [Al Maghrib: The Truth Behind the Day of Arafah and its Name](#)
2. [Arab News: The Day of Arafat](#)
3. [Pilgrims throng Mount Arafat in Makkah](#)
4. [The Day of Arafat in Pictures and Photos](#)
5. [Arafat](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 11 August, 2019

TISHA B'AV *Jewish*

This is the saddest day of the Jewish calendar. A full day fast is held at the conclusion of three weeks of mourning, while reflecting on the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem. Other tragedies in Jewish history are also recalled, many of which have coincidentally happened on this day. The Book of Lamentations is read at this time.

a) pp 208-209; b) pp 106-107, 109.

More information at ...

1. [The Laws of Tisha B'Av](#)
2. [Jewfaq: Tisha B'Av](#)
3. [Reform Judaism: Tishah B'Av](#)
4. [Tisha B'Av - the Ninth day of Av](#)
5. [My Jewish Learning - Tisha B'Av](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 12 August 2019 – Friday, 16 August 2019

EID-UL-ADHA / THE FESTIVAL OF SACRIFICE (10th Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim

This major festival (*al-Eid al-Kabir*) marks the end of the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage to Makkah) on the tenth day of the twelfth month of *Dhul-Hijja*. The *Hajj* is the last of the five pillars of Islam. Pilgrims performing *Hajj* sacrifice animals at the village of Mina on their way back to Makkah from Mount Arafat (where they have spent the first day of the festival). This commemorates Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son, Ismail. All over the world Muslims also sacrifice an animal, if they can afford it. They share out the meat among family, friends and the poor, who normally each get a third share.

Eid normally starts with Muslims going to the Mosque for prayers, dressed in their best clothes, and thanking Allah for all the blessings they have received. It is also a time when they visit family and friends as well as offering each other presents. At Eid it is obligatory to give a set amount of money to charity, often to be used to help poor people buy new clothes and food so that they too can celebrate.

All physically fit Muslims who can afford it are expected to make the visit to Makkah, in Saudi Arabia, at least once in their lives. Every year around 2 million Muslims from all over the world converge on Makkah. They stand before the Kaaba, a shrine built by Ibrahim, praising Allah together, and walk seven times anticlockwise around the Kaaba. The pilgrims or *Hajjis*, as they are called, wear simple white, two piece clothes called *Ihram* which promote the bonds of Islamic brotherhood and sisterhood by showing that everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah.

Obedience to the will of Allah, emulation of the Prophet's example and instruction, sharing equally with brother and sister Muslims, caring for the poor and needy, sharing with delight in this annual family celebration, these are what makes Eid ul Adha such a special time, the most significant celebration in the Islamic calendar.

Surah 37:99-111, 22:26-33 and 3:96-97.

a) pp 224-227; b) pp 111-112, 114-115, 117-118, 120, 137, 143.

More information at ...

1. [The Meaning of the Islamic festival of Sacrifice](#)
2. [Making Sacrifice on Eid ul Adha](#)
3. [Eid ul Adha for Schools](#)
4. [123 Greetings: Eid ul Adha](#)
5. [Ahadith: Search for Hadith on Eid ul Adha - 30 results](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 13 August, 2019 – Thursday, 15 August, 2019

O-BON Japanese (in Tokyo – for rest of Japan, see 13 July)

A Japanese festival when the spirits of the departed are welcomed back home with feasting and dancing. Fires are often lit to illuminate their arrival and departure. Celebrations in rural areas may take place one month earlier.

a) pp 162-163; b) pp 82, 86-87, 89.

More information at ...

1. [Go Japan: Japanese Festivals - O-bon](#)
2. [The Japan Guy: What is Obon?](#)
3. [Kids Web Japan; Bon Holidays](#)
4. [O-Bon in Pictures](#)
5. [The Diplomat: Obon - Japan Welcomes the Ancestors \(And Other Spirits Too\)](#)

Wednesday, 14 August 2019 / Thursday, 15 August 2019

RAKSHA BANDHAN *Hindu*

This festival takes place on the full moon of the month of Shravana. Raksha means 'protection' and *bandhan* means 'to tie'. Girls and married women in families which come from a north Indian background tie a *rakhi* (amulet) on the right wrists of their brothers, wishing them protection from all sorts of evil influences of various kinds. The brothers in return promise to protect their sisters and offer them gifts and sweets. This ritual not only strengthens the bond of love between brothers and sisters, but also reinforces the unity of the family.

Rakhis are traditionally simple, colourful bracelets made of interwoven red and gold threads. Some of them feature precious silk, beautifully crafted with gold and silver threads, embroidered with sequins and studded with semi-precious stones.

The key to understanding Raksha Bandhan is to know that it is marked by happiness and excitement, especially for young girls and women. Preparations for the festival begin well in advance. Then, on the Raksha Bandhan day, the festivities start at day break. Everyone is ready early and they gather for the worship of the deities. After invoking the blessings of the gods, the sister performs 'brother's *arti*', puts a *tika* on his forehead and ties her *rakhi* amidst the chanting of *mantras*. Then she gives him sweets and gifts. The brother accepts her offerings and vows to take care of her and be by her side in the time of her need. As a token he gives the sister a return gift and sweets. The family reunion itself is sufficient reason for celebrations, marked by . Tasty dishes, sweets, gifts, song and dance.

This is a universal opportunity for reunion and celebration. People exchange gifts and share exotic dishes and wonderful sweets. For those who are not able to meet each other, *rakhi* cards, e-rakhis and *rakhis* sent by post perform alternative ways of communicating the *rakhi* messages. Handmade *rakhis* are bought and sold, and homemade *rakhi* cards are increasingly frequent. It is typically a Hindu festival but nowadays people from different faiths celebrate it too.

No Hindu festival is complete without these typical Indian festivities, the gatherings, celebrations, exchange of sweets and gifts, lots of noise, singing and dancing. Raksha Bandhan has now become a regional celebration of just this sort to celebrate the sacred relationship between brothers and sisters. It is celebrated in different forms in different areas of India and is also known by different names. So. for example, in western Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa, Hindus offer coconuts to the sea god, Lord Varuna, and the festival is accordingly called Nariyal Purnima, coconut full-moon.

Throughout the country, but especially in north and western India, females tie *rakhis* around the wrists of boys and men who have no sisters. A man might acquire a sister who in every respect is such except in biological fact; or a woman may tie a *rakhi* around the wrist of her male first cousin who is without sisters. Indian texts are replete with the observation that men should look upon women as their sisters and mothers.

a) pp 69-70 b) 139-140.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: Raksha Bandhan](#)
2. [Society for the Confluence of Festivals in India: Raksha Bandhan](#)
3. [Indif Devotional: Raksha Bandhan - The Festival of Brotherhood and Love](#)
4. [Maps of India: Raksha Bandhan](#)
5. [Culture: Festivals - Rakhi \(Raksha Bandhan\)](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 15 August 2019

ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *Christian (Roman Catholic)*

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *Christian (Anglican)*

DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD *Christian (Orthodox) (Julian Calendar: 28 August)*

On this day many Christians celebrate the 'taking up' of Mary, body and soul, to heaven. Several Catholic communities mark the festival of the Assumption with processions and fêtes.

a) pp 97-98; b) pp 49, 55, 59.

More information at

1. [The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)
2. [Catholic Culture: The Assumption of Our Lady](#)
3. [Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos](#)
4. [About Catholicism: Assumption of Mary](#)
5. [Time and Date: Assumption of Mary](#)

Thursday, 15 August 2019

THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD *Christian (Orthodox)*

On this day, Eastern Orthodox Christians commemorate the passing of Mary, Mother of Christ, in the presence of the Apostles. Miraculously brought together at her house, Mary told the Apostles of the reason for their gathering, and comforted them. She raised her hands to pray for peace for the world, and blessed each apostle before giving up her spirit. The apostles buried Mary at Gethsemane, where Jesus had also been buried; but on the third day after the burial, when they were eating together, Mary appeared to them, saying "Rejoice". In this way, the apostles first learned that Mary's body had been taken up into Heaven, where Christ had already taken her spirit. When the apostles went to the grave, her body was gone, leaving a sweet fragrance. The symbolism of this event encompasses the idea of death as 'falling asleep' (this is what 'dormition' means), to be followed by eventual resurrection.

a) pp 97-98; b) pp 49, 55, 59.

More information at ...

1. [Orthodox Wiki: Dormition of the Mother of God](#)
2. [The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary](#)
3. [The Dormition of the Mother of God](#)
4. [The Church of the Dormition - Jerusalem or Antioch?](#)
5. [Russian Orthodox Church: Dormition of the Holy Virgin](#)

Thursday, 15 August, 2019

FESTIVAL OF HUNGRY GHOSTS / ZHOHGYUANJIE / CHUNG YUAN Chinese

Chinese Buddhist and ancestral festival, often called the 'Festival of Hungry Ghosts'. Paper objects for use in the spirit world are made and offered to aid those spirits who have no resting place or descendants. Large paper boats are made and burnt at temples to help these spirits on their journey across the sea of torment to Nirvana.

Buddhists and Taoists participate in rituals throughout the Hungry Ghost Month but particularly on the Hungry Ghost Festival. It is thought that the gates of hell are open throughout the Hungry Ghost Month, but that they are most open on this night. It is believed hungry and wayward ghosts often come to visit the living.

Many believers refrain from going out after the dark for fear they may encounter a ghost. They are also extra cautious near water as the ghosts of people who die by drowning are considered particularly troublesome, especially when they wander around the living world.

The Hungry Ghost Festival often begins with a parade where decorated lanterns in various shapes, including boats and houses, are placed on decorated floats. The paper lanterns are then carried to the water, lit, and released. The glowing lanterns and boats are meant to give directions to lost souls and help ghosts and deities find their way to the food offerings. The paper lanterns eventually catch fire and sink.

At some Hungry Ghost festivals, as Keelung in Taiwan, a Chinese character of a family's last name is placed on the lantern that the family has sponsored. It is believed the further the lantern floats on the water, the more good fortune the family will have in the coming year.

Offering food and support to ancestors and their spirits brings fulfilment, both to those who perform it and to those whose role is to be recipients of it.

a) pp 70, 72; b) p 43.

More information at ...

1. [About Chinese Culture: The Hungry Ghost Festival](#)
2. [About Mandarin: Ghost Month and Ghost Festival](#)
3. [Discover Hong Kong. Festivals/Chinese - The Hungry Ghosts festival](#)
4. [Images of Hungry Ghosts](#)
5. [Bukit Brown: 'Hungry Ghost Month' - Reflections](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 17 August 2019

NAVROZE / NO RUZ *Zoroastrian (Shahenshai)*

New Year's Day on the Shenshai Calendar. In the tenth century a group of Zoroastrians fled from Iran and were given religious sanctuary by the Hindus of Western India, where they became known as Parsis (or Persians). During the twentieth century the Zoroastrians of Iran have revised their calendar to take account of the leap year, while the Parsis of India have continued following the traditional imperial or Shenshai calendar. By the twentieth century the Parsis of India had become the largest group in the world to practise Zoroastrianism, and in the twenty first century over 95% of Zoroastrians in the UK are Parsis. Like their Indian counterparts, they celebrate two new years – giving more time for making merry!

a) pp 252-253; b) 127-128, 130-132, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Zoroastrian Heritage - Papeti - Navroze/No Ruz](#)
2. [Navroz - the Ismaili celebration](#)
3. [Navroze Special - A Parsi Feast awaits you](#)
4. [Parsi good will messages for Navroze](#)
5. [Iran Chamber Society: No-Rooz, The Iranian New Year at Present Times](#)

Tuesday, 20 August 2019

THE FESTIVAL OF THE POOL / EID UL GHADEER (or GHADIR) (18^h Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim (Shi'a)

This is a festival observed by Shi'a Muslims, for whom it is an extremely important day. It commemorates an event shortly before the death of the Prophet. While returning from Makkah to Medina after his final pilgrimage, accompanied by many thousands of his followers, the Prophet stopped at an oasis (the pool of Khumm) to deliver a sermon. While preaching, he is believed (by Shi'a Muslims) to have raised the hand of Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, and proclaimed, 'For whoever I am his leader, Ali is his leader. O God, love those who love him, and be hostile to those who are hostile to him'.

Immediately after this statement the Prophet revealed an *ayah* (a verse) of the Qur'an: 'Today I have perfected your religion and completed my favour upon you, and I was satisfied that Islam be your religion' (*Qur'an* 5, 3.) For Shi'a Muslims the 'perfecting' of the religion of Islam was the announcement concerning Ali, which they understand to be his clear appointment to be successor to the prophet as the spiritual and temporal leader of Islam. This sermon was preached by a pool (*ghadir*) in an area known as Khumm.

Since Eid ul Ghadir commemorates the Prophet Muhammad's last sermon, preached as it was in the desert whilst returning from *Hajj* (pilgrimage), it is viewed as being authoritative by members of the Shi'a community. The implication of the statement in the Prophet's sermon (that Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, would be the first Caliph of Islam) is that the leadership of Islam would remain within the Prophet's bloodline, the foundation for a line of Caliphs who would succeed the Prophet. It has become the source of many current divisions between Sunni and Shi'a communities throughout the Muslim world.

More information at ...

1. [Islamic Occasions - Eid ul Ghadeer](#)
2. [The Ismaili: Eid-e Ghadir](#)
3. [Ziaraat: Significance of Eid-e-Ghadeer](#)
4. [Slide Share: Eid Alghadeer](#)
5. [Seratonline: Why do Shias celebrate Eid-e- Ghadeer?](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 23 August 2019 Zoroastrian (Shenshai)

Tuesday, 26 March 2019 Zoroastrian (Iranian)

KHORDAD SAL Zoroastrian

The Birthday of Zarathushtra is one of the most important of Zoroastrian celebrations. Although the actual date of his birth cannot be accurately identified, the festival of Khordad Sal symbolically celebrates the birthday of Prophet Zarathushtra.

Khordad means perfection, and it is customary on this day to visit the Fire Temple to give thanks to Ahura Mazda, the Persian name for the one God, for giving humanity the ideal gift of the Prophet Zarathushtra. His followers participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony; listen to stories of his miraculous birth and life; and then celebrate with a lavish community meal, a drink and a dance.

On Khordad Sal Parsis clean their houses, hang *torans* of fresh flowers in the doorways, and create designs made of chalk on the floors (called *rangoli*). They wear new clothes, cook traditional foods, exchange gifts and salute each other with the greeting: Khordad Sal Mubarak! Prayers are offered and are followed by festive parties to give thanks for and celebrate the soul that evinced a philosophy of life that is both giving and fulfilling.

Zarathustra's ideas (monotheism tempered by belief in the Devil, the struggle between Good and Evil, a final judgement) greatly influenced today's major world religions, particularly Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i tradition. The Zoroastrian faith has endured many hardships, the most significant being the invasion into Iran by Alexander and later, the Arab conquest of Iran. Though greatly diminished in numbers, Zarathustra's followers have continued to honour his revolutionary teachings for over 3000 years.

Parsi families come together during the festivities that are put on during Khordad Sal – if families are unable to be together then prayers are offered for those who are not in attendance. It is an important celebration for the Parsi community, and because family (and community) is central to the themes of Zoroastrianism, guests are invited to participate in the festivities. Parsis also take the time during Khordad Sal to be introspective. They seek ways to improve the lives of others and themselves.

a) pp 252-255; b) pp 130-132, 31.

More information at ...

1. [Observe the Greater Noruz on Khordad Sal](#)
2. [A History of Khordad Sal](#)
3. [Mythic Maps - Khordad Sal](#)
4. [Sakshigopal: Happy Khordad Sal! Birthday Day of Zoroaster!](#)
5. [Khordad Sal celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Lord Zoroaster](#)

Friday, 23 August 2019 / Saturday, 24 August 2019

JANMASHTAMI / KRISHNA JAYANTI *Hindu*

The birthday of Krishna is widely celebrated throughout the Hindu world. He is the very popular eighth avatar/incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and many Hindus fast in his honour for 24 hours until midnight, the time of Krishna's birth. For them, Vishnu and Krishna are essentially one and the same. Those unable to fast will take a little fruit and milk. Krishna is welcomed in temples with singing, dancing and the distribution of sweets. At many homes and temples an image in blue of the new-born Krishna is put in a cradle and again special sweets (e.g. *panjiri*, the powder given traditionally to women after childbirth) are offered and distributed.

The celebration mainly consists of spending the whole night in the worship of Krishna, reciting hymns of praise and stories of his pastimes, repeating prayers from the *Bhagavata Purana*, offering respect to Krishna, and finally the ceremonial breaking of the fast. Temples are decorated for the occasion, *kirtans* are sung, bells are rung, the conch is blown, and Sanskrit hymns are recited in praise of Lord Krishna. At Mathura, the birthplace of Krishna, special spiritual gatherings are organised, and pilgrims from all over India attend these festive gatherings. The next day is celebrated as Krishna Jayanti, Krishna's birthday.

Krishna is thought to be ideal in all his human relationships - a darling son to his parents, an endearing and humble friend and comrade, playing the flute and mingling easily with cowherd boys and girls, a loving husband and a trusted brother.

At Krishna Jayanti, Hindu women in South India decorate their houses beautifully, ready to welcome their Lord. From the doorway to the inner meditation room of the house the door is marked with a child's footprints, using rice-flour mixed with water. This creates the feeling in them that their God's own feet have made these marks. For him they prepare various sweetmeats and offer them to him. These normally include butter, since as a child, Krishna was said to be fond of homemade delicacies and was known to steal fresh butter from neighbourhood homes and distribute it among his friends with great compassion.

The *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna reflects on the nature of Truth and Duty, has formed the basis and inspiration for much of Hindu belief, describing the various paths to God in a profound and yet concise manner. The setting of the Gita in Kurukshetra represents the eternal battlefield in the human soul. Here Krishna himself often affirms his role in life while he explains to Arjuna the intricacies of the highest spiritual philosophy, explaining the meaning and purpose of life. He shows how he was engaged incessantly in 'worldly' actions - but only for the welfare and sustenance of other people and the society in which he lived.

Krishna had indeed uttered falsehoods many times, had broken his pledges, had several wives and even 'married' 16,000 women, but still none of these actions violated the truth of his dedication, claiming that he did all these actions in a spirit of supreme detachment, motivated only with the highest goal of safeguarding Dharma.

a) pp 129-130; b) pp 71, 75.

More information at ...

1. [Mangalore: Sri Krishna Jayanti](#)
2. [Festivals of India: Sri Krishna Jayanti/Krishnaastami Krishna: How to Celebrate Janmashtami](#)
3. [Mythic Maps: Janmashtami](#)
4. [Janmashtami in Pictures <http://www.krishna.com/how-celebrate-janmashtami>](http://www.krishna.com/how-celebrate-janmashtami)
5. [AstroVed: Fill Your Life with Love and Abundance - Krishna's Birthday](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 27 August 2019 – Tuesday, 3 September 2019

PARYUSHAN Jain

These are eight days of purification, devoted to study, prayer, meditation and fasting, and ending with a period of confession and forgiveness. Often monks will be invited to give teachings from the Jain scriptures. Paryushana means 'to stay in one place', which signifies a time of reflection and repentance. Originally the practice was monastic for the most part.

a) pp 142, 146-147, 149; b) pp77, 78-79, 80.

More information at ...

1. [Jain World: Paryushan Parva](#)
2. [Colostate Education: Paryushana Parva](#)
3. [What is Paryushana in Jainism?](#)
4. [Images for Paryushan Parva](#)
5. [Jaina: Federation of Jain Associations in North America: Paryushan Parv](#)

Here is the ninth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Ram Mohan Roy. Born in 1774 into a Brahminic family who spoke Bengali, he also learned Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian as well subsequently as English. Twelve years of working with officials of the East India Company exposed him to western thinking and from his teaching and writing it is clear that he sought to reconcile Hindu and western philosophical traditions. He founded the Brahmo Samaj / the Theistic Society, and argued that many of the mythological and rituals aspects of both Hindu and Christian traditions could, and in many instances should be abandoned (eg caste, polygamy and suttee – the obligation on a widow to be burned on the funeral pyre of her husband). He regarded the scriptural texts such as the Upanishads and Puranas as complementary to the revelatory character of the natural world. He pursued this theme with Christians during the last three years of his life which were spent in England. However controversial a figure, he saw education as a central vehicle for very necessary moral, social and religious reform. In September 1833 at the age of 61 he died of meningitis in Bristol, where his burial is marked with an elaborate tomb. In Indian education he remains highly regarded.

<https://www.culturalindia.net/reformers/raja-ram-mohan-roy.html>

<http://indiansaga.com/history/reforms.html>

<http://uudb.org/articles/rajarammohunroy.html>

<http://www.thebrahmosamaj.net/founders/rammohun.html>

http://www.ijhsss.com/files/Mr_90be5144.-Madan-Mohan-Mandal---Dr.-Santosh-Kumar-Behera.pdf

<http://www.mahavidya.ca/2008/04/15/ram-mohun-roy-and-the-brahmo-samaj/>

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ram_Mohan_Roy

<https://archive.org/details/theenglishworks01rammuoft>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05xdcvk>

https://www.tripadvisor.ie/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g186220-d1207038-i40480700-Raja_Ram_Mohan_Roy_Tomb-Bristol_England.html

<http://true.brahmosamaj.in/brahmo-time-line.html>

<http://true.brahmosamaj.in/brahmo-samaj.html>

http://www.thebrahmosamaj.net/articles/brahmosamajlinks_katedean.html

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

*** Sunday, September /October 2019**

HARVEST FESTIVAL *Christian (Western, Anglican and Free Churches)*

Special services are held around this time of year to give thanks for the goodness of God's gifts in providing a harvest of crops along with all the other fruits of society. Displays of produce are often made, usually distributed afterwards to those in need. Increasingly the emphasis is on a wider interpretation than just the harvests of the fields and seas.

a) p 82; b) p 54.

More information at ...

1. [Barnabas: God is a faithful gardener](#)
2. [Ten amazing harvest festivals from around the world](#)
3. [Activity Village - Suggestions for the Harvest Festival](#)
4. [Images of Harvest Festival Celebrations](#)
5. [Send a Cow: Harvest Festival](#)

Sunday, 1 September 2019

INSTALLATION OF THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB IN THE HARMANDIR SAHIB,

Amritsar 1604 CE *Sikh*

In 1604 CE, in the place of worship where the Golden Temple now stands, Guru Arjan Dev, the Sikhs' fifth Guru, installed the Adi Granth, a newly compiled volume of scripture. It consisted of the hymns of the first five Gurus plus those of other Indian and Persian 'saint-poets' from the Hindu and Muslim traditions. After the selections were made, the Guru dictated the hymns to Bhai Gurdas, who wrote down the words and music of the Adi Granth. Guru Arjan later suffered a martyr's death, preferring to save his life rather than make alterations to the hymns, as required by Emperor Jahangir.

Having compiled the Granth, the Guru placed it in the newly-built *Harmandir Sahib* (Golden Temple) in Amritsar. He nominated Bhai Buddha as the custodian of the Granth. The Guru bowed before the collection, acknowledging the higher authority of the written words to the personal importance and significance which he possessed as Guru. After this time, he no longer sat at a level above the Granth, but below it. He also instituted daily public worship at the *Harmandir Sahib*, where the Granth was recited all day long to the accompaniment of stringed musical instruments.

The second version of the Granth was prepared by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706 CE. He dictated the entire Guru Granth Sahib from memory to Bhai Mani Singh, re-editing the Adi Granth to the form in which it is found today. He removed several unauthenticated writings and added four hymns for evening prayers and several from his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Otherwise, the Granth was left as it was before in the days of Guru Arjan. Sikhs regard the Guru Granth Sahib as their living Guru – hence the importance of this celebration. Since his day the Guru Granth Sahib consists of 1430 pages and 5864 verses. Its spiritual teachings are referred to as *bani* or *gurbani*.

In all gurdwaras and many Sikh homes, the Guru Granth Sahib is read every day. No Sikh ceremony is regarded as complete unless it is performed in the presence of the Granth. Sikhs frequently receive a hukam or divine order through one of the hymns chosen at random from the left hand pages of the Guru Granth Sahib. Similarly, at the end of a service, after the *ardas* prayers, the Granth is opened at random and a portion is read. On special occasions, the Guru Granth Sahib is recited non-stop from cover to cover by a string of readers. It requires nearly 48 hours to complete the continuous reading, which is known as an *akhand path*. This can be performed on any important occasion, and is regarded as the highest and noblest ceremony in the Sikh religion.

The Guru Granth Sahib is a remarkable storehouse of spiritual knowledge and teachings which does not prescribe any rites or rituals but stresses meditation on the Name of God. Most of the hymns are addressed to God and often describe the devotee's condition: his aspirations and yearning, his agony in separation and his longing to be with the Lord. There are no mythological narratives, although God is described in anthropomorphic terms, and the Gurus are not afraid to use the imagery of family relationships to describe the union of God and man. Whether in Temple, Gurdwara or home, the Guru Granth Sahib has become the focal point of all Sikh worship.

a) p 244; b) p 126.

More information at ...

1. [All About Sikhs: Harmandir Sahib - Installation of the Holy Granth](#)
2. [SGPC: Guru Granth Sahib](#)
3. [Sikhism Guide: Sri Guru Granth Sahib](#)
4. [Sikh Scriptures, Images, Excerpts and Quotations](#)
5. [Gurbani Files: Sri Guru Granth Sahib - A Brief Introduction](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 1 September 2019

ISLAMIC NEW YEAR 1441 AH / AL-HIJRA / RA'S UL 'AM (Muharram 1) Muslim

Al Hijra marks the celebration of the Islamic New Year's Day. It is a low-key event in the Muslim world, celebrated less than the two major celebrations, Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha. The day commemorates the *Hijra* or migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Medina in 622 CE, which led to the establishment of the Muslim community there. It is not universally celebrated amongst Sunni Muslims but is notable since Muslim years are dated from this time and are marked AH (*Anno Hegirae* – the year of the *Hijrah*) or *After the Hijrah*. In 2019 CE the Muslim year 1441 AH begins.

In the year 622 CE the Prophet Muhammad and a number of his followers moved from Makkah/Mecca to the city of Medina and set up the first Islamic state there. Their arrival marked the beginning of Islam as a community in which spiritual and earthly life were completely integrated. They were a group inspired by and totally obedient to God, bound together by religious faith. By breaking the link with his own tribe the Prophet demonstrated that tribal and family loyalties were insignificant compared to the bonds of Islam.

For some Muslim communities this is a day of celebration at the mosque, where stories are told of the Prophet and his Companions. There are no special religious rituals required at this time but a special prayer service is normally held in the mosque and afterwards people wish one another a happy New Year. On this day Muslims think about the meaning of the Hijra and regard this as a good time for new year resolutions, relating to their following of the example of the Prophet.

For the Shi'a community the more important significance of the New year is that this is the first day of a period of fasting, mourning and remembrance, leading up to the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions on the Day of Ashura.

Muslims who migrated to Medina in support of the Prophet were called *muhajirun* (emigrants). Many of them became known as the 'Companions of the Prophet'. Muhammad praised them highly for having forsaken their native city to follow him and promised that God would favour them. They remained a separate and greatly esteemed group in the Muslim community, honoured both in Makkah and in Medina, and assumed leadership of the Muslim state, through the caliphate, after Muhammad's death.

As a result of the Hijrah, Muhammad paired many of the *muhajirun* with members of another distinct body of Muslims who had come into being, the *ansar* (helpers); they were people of Medinah who welcomed and aided Muhammad and the *muhajirun*. The *ansar* were members of the two major feuding tribes of Medinah whom Muhammad had been invited to Medinah to reconcile while he was still a rising figure in Makkah. In time they came to be some of his most devoted supporters.

The significance of *Al Hijra* for Sunni Muslims relates to their committing themselves to a spiritual form of migration – journeying out of a way of life mired in the worldly affairs of this existence – and disciplining themselves to ensure their fitness for their journey to the next life (*akhirah*). To achieve this result they seek to emulate the mindset the Companions of the Prophet possessed when they performed their original migration (the *hijra* from Makkah to Medina), a journey undertaken in obedience to Allah's wishes.

a) pp 213-215, 227-228; b) pp 112, 118.

More information at ...

1. [Islam for the World: Al Hijrah or the Prophet's Emigration](#)
2. [The Hijrah in Islam](#)
3. [BBC Religions: Al-Hijra - The Muslim New Year](#)
4. [Al Hijra Celebrations](#)
5. [Hijrah in Islam](#)

Monday, 2 September 2019

GANESHA CHATURTHI *Birthday of Ganesh Hindu*

Ganesh Chaturthi (or Vinayaka Chaturthi) is a Hindu festival that honours the birth of the beloved Hindu elephant-headed god, Ganesh, (also known as Ganesha, Ganapati and Vinayaka). He is the son of Shiva and Parvati, and is a popular god of wisdom and prosperity, worshipped for his ability to remove obstacles and bring good fortune. He is accordingly invoked by Hindus at the outset of any auspicious events, rites and rituals such as marriage, journeys, etc. This festival is particularly significant for Hindus from Maharashtra and is celebrated in a major way in Mumbai (Bombay). Celebrations last for one, five or ten days, and conclude with the immersion in water of the image of Ganesh.

There are numerous stories in Hindu mythology associated with the birth and life of this elephant-headed god, whose vehicle is the rat. Legend has it that Parvati created Ganesh out of the sandalwood dough that she used for her bath. She then breathed life into him. Leaving him to stand guard at the door, she went to have her bath in privacy. When her husband, Shiva returned, the child who had never seen him before refused to let him enter. Shiva cut off the head of the child and entered the house. When Parvati, learnt that her son was dead, she was distraught and asked Shiva to bring him back to life. He sent his servants to fetch the head of the first creature they met. They encountered a young elephant, cut off its head, and Shiva fixed it on the body of Ganesha.

Another story tells of the wedding of Ganesh. Shiva and Parvati decided that one of their sons, Kartikeya or Ganesh, whichever was the first to circumambulate the earth three times, would be the first to be married. Kartikeya flew off on his vehicle - a speedy peacock. Ganapati's vehicle, the rat, was no match for it. But Parvati showed Ganesh, as the more devoted of the two, a simpler way to win. She advised him to walk around his parents, and explained that whoever offered puja to his parents and circled round them would receive the same merit as he who went around the earth. So Ganapati won the race and married first, showing that he who respects his parents attains what he most wishes.

Furthermore, as the designated scribe for the Mahabharata, Ganesh is said to have removed one of his tusks and from it carved a quill. He used this to write the epic poem on palm leaves as the sage Ved Vyas recited it to him. The writing of the epic is said to have taken three years!

On the first day of Ganesh Chaturthi, ardent followers of the god meditate early in the morning on the stories connected with Ganesha. After taking a bath, they go to the temple and offer prayers to him, along with coconut and sweet pudding. They pray with faith and devotion that he will remove all the obstacles they experience on their spiritual path. They also worship him later on at home.

Life-like clay models of Ganesha are made some two to three months prior to the day of the festival. The size of these images may vary from threequarters of an inch to over 25 feet. The artists who create the images of Ganesh often compete with each other to make bigger and more magnificent and elegant ones. These larger versions can be anything from 10 metres to 30 metres in height. Once an image of Ganesh is created, a special ceremony is undertaken to invoke the god's holy presence into the image. Offerings of sweets, flowers, rice, coconut and coins are made to the deity, and the image is also anointed with red *chandan* powder. Prayers are offered to Ganesha every day during the festival, and temples devoted to him organise special events and prayers. Those who have an image of Ganesha in their house also treat and care for him as a well beloved guest.

For 10 days, Ganesha is worshipped. On the 11th and last day of the festival, his image is taken through the streets in a procession, accompanied by dancing and singing, to be immersed in a lake, river or the sea. This symbolises his journey towards his abode in Kailash, where he takes with him each year the misfortunes of all humanity.

a) pp 128-129; b) pp 70-71, 75.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: Ganesh Chaturthi](#)
2. [Taj Online: Ganesh Chaturthi](#)
3. [Go India: Guide to the Ganesh Chaturthi Festival in India](#)
4. [Swaminarayan: Ganesh Chaturthi](#)
5. [Ashtavinayaka: Ganesh Chaturthi](#)

Tuesday, 3 September 2019

SAMVATSARI (International Forgiveness Day) Jain

This is the last day of the eight day festival of Paryushana, which many regard as the most important festival of Jainism. It is the holiest day of the Jain calendar and many Jains observe it as a complete fast. The entire day is spent in prayer and contemplation, and it climaxes in the evening when people ask for forgiveness from others – and from all living creatures - for any hurt they have knowingly or unknowingly caused during the previous year.

The role of a festival such as Samvatsari involving fasting, whether partial or total, along with a request for forgiveness, is a widespread feature of religious practice (cf for example Pavarana Day, Yom Kippur, Ramadan and Lent), and is a natural and universal element of annual observance in all Jain traditions.

More information at ...

1. [Samvatsari - When Jains purify themselves](#)
2. [Samvatsari, the climax of the festival of Paryushana Parva](#)
3. [Why do Jains say 'michchhami-dukkadam' and when do they say it?](#)
4. [Samvatsari Greetings Cards](#)
5. [Samvatsari - The Festival of Forgiveness](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 4 September 2019

FRAVARDIN MAH PARAB *Zoroastrian (Shenshai - Parsi)*

On the day of Fravardin, the 19th day of the month of Fravardin, the first month of the year, Zoroastrians visit the vicinity of the Towers of Silence in India (or in the UK the Zoroastrian Cemetery in Brookwood, Surrey) to participate in a jashan ceremony in memory of the departed fravashis (guardian spirits and souls of the community). Sacred food is prepared as an offering to the departed during the jashan and is later shared by the participants.

More information at ...

1. [Sympatico: Fravashi](#)
2. [Fravardin - a month of good fortune dedicated to the holy spirit](#)
3. [Farvardegan day on Farvardin Roj, Farvardin Mah](#)
4. [Images for Fravardin Mah Parab](#)
5. [Farvardegan](#)

Tuesday, 10 September 2019

ASHURA (10th Muharram) Muslim

For Sunni Muslims this is one of the two days of a minor fast that the Prophet kept in his lifetime. The second day of the fast may be observed either on the day preceding or the day following the 10th of Muharram. For Shi'a Muslims this is a day when they recall a great tragedy that took place on Muharram 10, AH 61 (680 CE). The Imam Husayn (son of Ali and Fatimah and therefore grandson of the Prophet) travelling with his family and many followers, was attacked by the troops of the Caliph Yazid.

After eight days without water Husayn was killed and his family and followers massacred at Karbala (now in Iraq). Shi'a Muslims remember the events in the days leading up to Ashura when they fast and recall these terrible events. The importance of this holy day can be judged from a popular Shi'a saying which some attribute to a Muslim poet and some to the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Saadiq: "Live as if every day is Ashura, every land Karbala!"

a) pp 228-230; b) pp 118-119

More information at ...

1. [About Islam: The Day of 'Ashura](#)
2. [World Time: Shi'ite Muslims Around the World Mark Ashura](#)
3. [Ashura of Muharram - a Shia and Sunni Muslim Observance](#)
4. [Huffington Post: Ashura - Dates, Rituals and History Explained with Photos](#)
5. [Religion Facts: What is Ashura?](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 11 September, 2019

ETHIOPIAN NEW YEAR'S DAY *Rastafarian*

Ethiopian families love to celebrate their New Year, which they call Enqutatash, 'gift of jewels', with presents and visits. They celebrate a four year cycle, in which each year is named after an evangelist. It is claimed that the Queen of Sheba was in fact an Ethiopian, and that when she returned from her visit to King Solomon, her chiefs welcomed her back by replenishing her treasury with *enku*, 'jewels'.

Rastafarians throughout the world honour it too. It is a spring festival that has been celebrated since early times, and the cessation of the rains marks a month of transition from the old year to the new. Early in the morning everybody goes to Church wearing traditional Ethiopian clothing. Afterwards there is a family meal of *injera* (flat bread) and *wat* (stew). Children dance through the villages dressed in their new clothes at this time, and in the evening households light bonfires as the focus for much singing and dancing. Girls go from house to house handing out bouquets and singing songs, and boys sell pictures that they have painted so that they will have sufficient money to buy presents for members of their families.

More information at ...

1. [The New Year is a happy time in Ethiopia](#)
2. [Ethiopian Calendar: Ethiopian New Year](#)
3. [Rastafarians celebrate Ethiopian New Year's Day](#)
4. [Jamaican Rasta wishes you a Happy New Year](#)
5. [Rastafarian holy days now honoured in UK prisons](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 13 September, 2019

RABBIT IN THE MOON FESTIVAL/ZHONGQIUJIE/CHUNG CH'IU Chinese

This Mid-Autumn festival celebrates the moon's birthday. Traditionally, offerings of moon cakes are made by women to the goddess of the moon. Offerings are also made to the rabbit in the moon, who is pounding the elixir of life with a pestle. 'Spirit money' is bought along with incense and offered to the moon by women. They also make special 'moon' cakes containing ground lotus and sesame seeds or dates. These contain an image of the crescent moon or of the rabbit in the moon, and children holding brightly coloured lanterns are allowed to stay up late to watch the moon rise from some nearby high place.

a) p 72; b) pp 43-44.

More information at ...

1. [Mystery Authors: Rabbit in the Moon Festival](#)
2. [SACU: Mid Autumn Festival](#)
3. [Wiki How: Enjoy a Chinese Moon Festival](#)
4. [Mid Autumn Festival Legends and Stories](#)
5. [Chinese Child Book: Chinese Moon Festival Background](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 20 September, 2019 – Thursday, 26 September, 2019

HIGAN Japanese

Monday, 23 September, 2019

SHUUBUN NO HI Japanese

This celebration marks the autumn equinox for Japanese people. As at the spring equinox, harmony and balance are the themes; sutras are recited and the graves of relatives are visited. September 23 is the equinox, the 24-hour period when day and night are the same length, the beginning of Autumn. On this day the sun shines at the equator for 12 hours. On the next day, days begin to become shorter than nights in the Northern Hemisphere.

In the past, the autumnal equinox in Japan was called *shuki-koureisai* (the autumn festival of the Emperor's spirits). On this day, the emperor worshipped his ancestors by himself. Nowadays it is called *Shuubun-no-hi* and is a national holiday. It is the middle day of *higan*, a seven day period when the people of Japan commemorate their ancestors. Memorial services often take place at Buddhist temples, and many people visit their family's graves with offerings of rice cakes, flowers, incense sticks, and offer prayers to comfort the spirits of their ancestors. Although Buddhism is common in India and China, these countries have no similar custom.

Higan has Buddhist origins. It literally means the "other side of the river of death". The two sides of the river represent the worlds of life and death. During these days, Japanese families honour and pray for the repose of their deceased ancestors. This is different from *Obon* where the spirits of the dead are said to visit the houses of their relatives. At this time of year, living relatives are the ones who visit graves. They clean the tombs and offer prayers and flowers. They also burn incense sticks and offer sweet rice balls called *Ohagi*.

Higan, for Buddhists, is a good time to focus on the 6 Perfections: *Dana* (generosity), *Sila* (virtue), *Ksanti* (patience), *Virya* (effort), *Dhyana* (meditation, also 'zen'), and *Prajna* (wisdom). Just as the worlds of death and life are separated by a river, so the Buddhists believe the 6 Perfections will be the bridge to cross from this life to *Nirvana*.

a) p 164; b) p 87.

More information at ...

1. [Kabuki Academy - Shuubun no Hi](#)
2. [Kalamalama - Shubun no hi](#)
3. [Tokyo 5: Shubun no hi](#)
4. [Shubun no hi - cleaning the ancestral tombs](#)
5. [The Solemnity of Japanese Autumnal Equinox Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 23 September, 2019

AUTUMN EQUINOX (Alban Elued or Alban Elfed) Druid

Day and night stand hand in hand as equals. As the shadows lengthen, Pagans see the darker faces of the God and Goddess. For many Pagans, this rite honours old age and the approach of Winter.

More information at ...

1. [The White Goddess: The Wheel of the Year - Mabon, the Autumn Equinox](#)
2. [Mabon Rites and Rituals](#)
3. [The Celtic Connection: Mabon - by Akasha](#)
4. [Simple Wiccan Mabon Ritual](#)
5. [The Llewellyn Encyclopedia: Mabon Ritual](#)

Sunday, 29 September 2019 - Monday, 7 October 2019

NAVARATRI Hindu

All around the world Hindu families gather at this time to participate in circle dances associated with the goddess Durga and with Lord Krishna. Navaratri means nine nights, the length of the festival. Hindus from different areas of India, and especially from Gujarat, celebrate it in different ways: in the north the Ram Lila is performed each night, in celebration of Lord Rama's victory over Ravana, the demon king of Sri Lanka; many Punjabis worship the goddess daily during Navaratri, and observe a strictly vegetarian diet; on the eighth day, Durga Ashtami, Punjabi Hindus fast before conducting worship of the Goddess that involves honouring young girls as the embodiment of her power.

The significance of Navratri lies in offering devotion to the mother goddess Amba (Durga), who is worshipped in many forms. These are known as 'shakti' (power), since the tales tell of the goddesses' power in the killing of demons. Parvati, the wife of Shiva is also said to have taken the forms of several different goddesses. In particular, the goddess Durga is worshipped for the first three days of Navratri, followed by the goddess Laxmi for the next three. The last three days are devoted to the goddess Saraswati. The significance of these female deities lies in the variety of methods they portray for deriving solutions to life's problems, and so Durga triumphs over evil, Saraswati removes ignorance, and Lakshmi brings prosperity.

Navratri in India witnesses myriad forms of devotion across the country, but everywhere the common underlying theme is of the struggle between and the victory of good over evil. It is celebrated all over India and also among the Hindu diaspora with great enthusiasm. A common greeting during this festival is *Shubh Navratri* (Happy Navratri). Before the festival, skilled artisans prepare clay models of the goddess in her various forms. At the end of the festival these are transported to rivers or the sea where they are immersed.

Many Hindus take part in special ceremonies, rituals, fasts and festivities. People buy new clothes, prepare delicious sweets and organise gifts for family and friends. During Navratri, many Hindus in Gujarat and elsewhere wear colourful costumes and perform a special type of vigorous dance known as *garba*. Traditionally, *garbas* are performed around an earthen lamp or an image of the mother goddess. It is a devotional dance form that derives from the folklore of Lord Krishna singing and dancing with the *gopis*, using 'dandiya' or slim wooden sticks. Over the years the Navratri festival has seen many changes, with well-choreographed dance performances, high-end acoustics, innovations in music, and people dressed in made-to-order, bright costumes. Performances of the 'Ramlila', in which people enact scenes from the Ramayana are a regular feature.

a) pp 130-133; b) pp 61, 65, 72-73, 75.

More information at ...

1. [India Online - Navaratri](#)
2. [Gujarat India: All about Gujarat - Navratri](#)
3. [Rudraksha: Navratri festival/Navratri puja](#)
4. [Photos celebrate the ending of Navratri](#)
5. [Huffington Post: Navratri Photos - Durga Puja: Worshipping the Divine Mother](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 29 September, 2019

MICHAELMAS *National*

One of the four Quarter Days in the UK legal calendar.

More information at ...

1. [Culture UK - Michaelmas](#)
2. [Catholic Culture: Michaelmas Day](#)
3. [About Paganism: Michaelmas](#)
4. [Are we ready to embrace the Michaelmas Goose once again?](#)
5. [Waldorf Homes Schools: Michaelmas Circle, Story and Resources](#)

Monday, 30 September, 2019 – Tuesday, 1 October, 2019

ROSH HASHANAH (*Head of the Year*) *Jewish*

(New Year's Day, 5780 years from the creation of the world). Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of ten days of repentance and self examination, during which God sits in personal judgment on every individual. The blowing of the ram's horn (*shofar*) in the synagogue is a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son, Isaac. Apples dipped in honey are eaten in the hope of a 'sweet' new year. The greeting is '*Leshanah Tovah Tikatev*' (may you be inscribed for a good year).

The sequence of repentance that Rosh Hashanah starts accentuates the Jewish conviction that God forgives the sincere penitent - that He is a merciful judge. While that does not relieve each person of the responsibility to accept the consequences - including punishment - for their actions, it means that Jews do not see people as essentially 'sinners', merely 'people who inevitably sin and must repent'. The mood is solemn in synagogue, but it is not sad at all. Everyone present knows that this happens every year, but that does not relieve them of the need to try again. At the same time, the haunting notes of the shofar make the festival somehow timeless and simple. Unlike many other Jewish festivals, there are very few practices or customs associated with the day, though it is very widely observed and families frequently travel long distances to gather for the festive meals.

Genesis 22, Leviticus 23:24-25.

a) pp 193-196; b) pp 90, 99-102, 109, 141.

More information at ...

1. [Jewfaq: Rosh Hashanah](#)
2. [Jewish Virtual Library: Rosh HaShana - History and Overview](#)
3. [Rosh Hashanah for Tiny Tots](#)
4. [Rosh Hashanah - Images and Pictures](#)
5. [About Judaism: Rosh Hashanah](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

OCTOBER 2019

Edith Cavell

Here is the tenth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Edith Cavell was executed in October 1915 at the age of fifty after an exemplary life in teaching and nursing. She worked as a teacher/governess for ten years, starting at the age of 18, including 5 years with a French speaking family in Brussels. In 1895 prompted by family illness she switched into nursing in London and Manchester, where she came face to face with chronic poverty and epidemics. Drawing on this experience, in 1907 she took on responsibility for a nurse training school back in Belgium. Following the outbreak of WW1 this became a Red Cross Hospital and she began living with the consequences of German invasion and occupation. Openly caring for anyone sick or wounded whichever side they were on, she also became secretly engaged in resistance activities, including helping Allied soldiers escape via neutral Holland. For this she was arrested by the German authorities for aiding the enemy; she was court-martialed and shot by firing squad.

<http://historysheroes.e2bn.org/hero/timeline/86>

<http://www.edithcavell.org.uk>

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/oct/12/freedomofinformation.politics>

<https://edithcavell.org.uk/edith-cavells-life/pastor-le-seurs-testimony>

<https://edithcavell.org.uk/edith-cavells-life/account-by-reverend-h-stirling-gahan-on-the-execution-of-edith-cavell/>

<http://www.rugusavay.com/edith-cavell-quotes>

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

*** Sunday, October / September 2019**

HARVEST FESTIVAL *Christian (Western, Anglican and Free Churches)*

Special services are held around this time of year to give thanks for the goodness of God's gifts in providing a harvest of crops along with all the other fruits of society. Displays of produce are often made, usually distributed afterwards to those in need. Increasingly the emphasis is on a wider interpretation than just the harvests of the fields and seas.

a) p 82; b) p 54.

More information at ...

1. [Barnabas: God is a faithful gardener](#)
2. [Ten amazing harvest festivals from around the world](#)
3. [Activity Village - Suggestions for the Harvest Festival](#)
4. [Images of Harvest Festival Celebrations](#)
5. [Send a Cow: Harvest Festival](#)

Tuesday, 1 October 2019

JASHN-E MEHERGAN (or MIHR JASHAN) Zoroastrian (Iranian)

Jashn-e Mehergan is an Autumn festival, and like NoRuz its origins have been lost in antiquity. Mehergan is dedicated to the divinity Meher or Mithra, who is associated with the sun and with justice. The ripening of the crops and fruits at this time of the year is seen as symbolic of the ripening of the world into fullness, before the moment of the ultimate victory over evil. It evokes the physical resurrection of the body along with its immortal soul, as promised by the Lord, Ahura Mazda.

It is customary at this time to visit the Fire Temple to offer thanks to the Creator God, to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, to listen to stories of King Faridoon's triumphant capture of the evil Zohak, and to share in a special community meal. For this celebration, the participants wear new clothes and prepare a decorative, colourful table. The sides of the tablecloth are festooned with dry wild marjoram. On the table are placed a copy of the Khordeh Avesta (the 'little Avesta'), a mirror and a *sormeh-dan* (a traditional eyeliner or *kohl*), together with rosewater, sweets, flowers, vegetables and fruits, (pomegranates and apples), and nuts such as almonds or pistachios. A few silver coins and lotus seeds are set in a dish of water, scented with extract of marjoram.

A burner is also part of the table setting, ready for frankincense and seeds of Syrian rue to be thrown on the flames. At lunch time, when the ceremony begins, everyone in the family stands in front of the mirror to pray. Sherbet is drunk and then - as a good omen - *kohl* is applied around the eyes. Handfuls of wild marjoram, lotus and sugar plum seeds are thrown over one another's heads while they embrace each other. The meal concludes with an appropriate drink, dancing and merrymaking.

Mehregan is an Iranian festival and is celebrated in honour of Mithra, the angel of covenants, and hence of interpersonal relationships such as friendship, affection and love. He is the greatest of the *Yazats* (angels), and is an angel of light, associated with the sun (but distinct from it), and with legal contracts. Mithra is also a common noun in the Avesta meaning 'contract'. He is said to have a thousand ears and ten-thousand eyes.

Mithra figures prominently in the writings of other religions too. He is mentioned in the Rig Veda over 200 times, where the Sun is said to be the eye of Mithra. In the angelology of Jewish mysticism, as the result of Zoroastrian influence, Mithra appears as Metatron, the highest of the angels. He appeared as Mithras, god of the Mithraic religion popular among the Roman military. He is also mentioned in Manichaeism and in Buddhist texts. Mehregan, Tiragan, and Norooz, were the only Zoroastrian feasts to be mentioned in the Talmud, which is an indication of their popularity - and his.

a) pp 254-255; b) p 131.

More information at ...

1. [Iran Review - Jashn-e-Mehregan](#)
2. [Fouman: Collective Iranian Culturebase - Mehregan](#)
3. [Cais/SOAS: Celebrations - The Festival of Mehregan](#)
4. [Anobanini: Mehrgan-Mihragan-Jashn-e Mehr](#)
5. [Historical Iran: Iranian Sites and People](#)

Wednesday, 2 October, 2019

GANDHI JAYANTI *Hindu*

Gandhi Jayanti is an Indian national holiday that celebrates the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, who is referred to as the 'Father of the Nation'. He was the driving force behind the foundation of the state of India. His birthday is celebrated with services, prayers and painting and essay contests with topics that glorify peace and non-violence, and the singing of Gandhi's favourite devotional song entitled 'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram' (Ram Dhun for short). The distribution of alcohol is banned on Gandhi Jayanti, as on other national holidays.

More information at ...

1. [Festivals of India: Gandhi Jayanti](#)
2. [Speech of Mahatma Gandhi 16 Novmber 1969](#)
3. [Gandhi - Celebrations and Quotations](#)
4. [Quotations from Mahatma Gandhi](#)
5. [Who was Mahatma Gandhi?](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

***Thursday, 3 October / Friday, 4 October 2019 - Tuesday, 8 October 2019**

DURGA PUJA *Hindu*

Durga Puja is a celebration of the Mother goddess, and of the victory of the revered warrior goddess Durga over the evil buffalo demon, Mahishasura. The festival honours the powerful female force (*shakti*) in the universe.

In Nepal, Bangladesh and West Bengal and other northeastern areas of India, Durga Puja is the biggest annual festival and lasts for several days. In Kolkota (Calcutta) hundreds of *pandals* (decorated temporary shrines) are put up. The goddess's slaying of the demon is celebrated, and in Nepal the celebration may involve animal sacrifices. The festival frequently ends with the immersion of figures of Durga in rivers and in the sea.

The name 'Durga' means 'inaccessible', and she is the personification of the active side of the divine '*shakti*' energy of her partner, Shiva. In fact, she represents the furious powers of all the male gods, and is the ferocious protector of the righteous, and destroyer of all evil. Durga is usually portrayed as riding a lion, and carrying weapons in her many arms.

The celebration of total victory over this personification of evil, together with the role of the female goddess in achieving an annual victory as great as this, are grounds for widespread rejoicing throughout the Indian subcontinent. The immersion of the goddess in water is, however, an act of purification and adoration. It denotes cleansing and rebirth rather than drowning and destruction.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: The History and Origin of Durga Puja](#)
2. [About India: Guide to Durga Puja Festival in India](#)
3. [The Essentials of Durga Puja](#)
4. [Durga Puja in Photographs](#)
5. [Everything you need to know about Durga Puja in Kolkata](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 7 October, 2019

PICNIC IN A HIGH PLACE / CLIMB A HIGH MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL / CHONGYANGJIE / CH'UNG YANG Chinese

This Double Ninth festival is the day for hill climbing or 'going up on a high place'. It reminds of an ancient seer who foretold an imminent natural calamity and escaped by going into the hills. The rest of humanity ignored his warnings and perished. Kites are flown, family graves visited, and a 'golden pig' is shared by large families with fruit, wine, tea and rice.

a) pp 72-73; b) p 44.

More information at ...

1. [China Vista - Picnic in a High Place](#)
2. [Travel China Guide - Chong Yang](#)
3. [About Taoism: Double Ninth Festival - Ching Yang Jie](#)
4. [Pictures for Kite Flying Day](#)
5. [English People: Chong Yang Jie: The story of how the plague monster was defeated](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

***Monday, 7 October 2019 / Tuesday, October 8 2019**

DUSSEHRA / VIJAYA DASHAMI Hindu

The festival of Dussehra, usually falls on the last day of the Durga Puja celebrations, which is also the tenth day after the start of Navratri. It is observed throughout India to commemorate the victory of Lord Rama over the ten-headed demon Ravana. He, Ravana, was the king of Lanka who had abducted Rama's wife, Sita, and was subsequently vanquished in battle. Large effigies of him are burnt as the sun goes down. This day is celebrated as the 'Victorious Tenth' (*Vijaya Dashami*) and huge figures of Ravana alongside his son, Meghnada, and his brother, Kumbhakarna, are filled with fireworks and set on fire in public parks. In the UK some temples carry this out, even if on a smaller scale.

On this day, Hindus worship the goddess Durga, who, pleased with Rama's devotion, gave him the secret knowledge of how to kill Ravana. By using this, he was able to defeat Ravana and rescue his abducted wife, Sita. On this last day of the festival, young men and small boys, dressed as Rama, as Lakshman, his brother, as Hanuman, Rama's chief supporter, and as Ravana, the demon, proceed through the streets of the community as part of an elaborate float. Rama and Ravana engage in battle; Ravana is defeated. At the end of the day, images of Ravana are placed in lakes and rivers to symbolise his defeat.

Then at sunset Rama fires an arrow into giant sized images of Meghnada and Kumbhakarna, stuffed - as is the effigy of Ravana - with crackers and explosives; finally an arrow is shot into Ravana's effigy also, to the encouraging shouts of '*Ramchandra ki jai*', 'Victory to Rama', and large explosions ripple through the sky.

Dussehra also symbolises the triumph of the warrior goddess Durga over the buffalo demon, Mahishasura. The story relates how *asuras* or demigods had become powerful and tried to defeat the *devas* and capture heaven. The goddess Durga came to the rescue and took up the form of Shakti to kill Mahishasura. Riding on a lion, she fought him for nine days and nights. On the tenth day, she killed him. Thus, in both legends, the festival tells a story of the victory of good over evil.

Dussehra is celebrated with excitement and fervour across the country. People revel in the festivities by wearing new clothes, exchanging gifts, preparing delicacies, watching Ramlila plays and burning huge effigies of Ravana in the evening. However, every state in India has its own story behind the festivity and its own unique way of celebrating it. Dussehra is celebrated not just in India, but in other countries as well including Nepal, Bangladesh and many others. It is a time when Hindus all over the world visit their relatives and friends.

For the nine days of Navaratri, people fast and perform religious rites so as to sanctify themselves and take a step towards purity, piety and prosperity. On the tenth day, they burn everything that is evil in them, hatred, maliciousness, greed, anger and violence (symbolically represented by the burning of effigies of Ravana, Meghnath and Kumbhakarna) and so they emerge as better individuals filled with a sense of gratitude, devotion and reverence.

Though there are several legendary tales behind the festival and its celebration, all culminate by marking the rise of goodness over evil, of positivity over negativity. In burning the effigies people attempt to burn away all their selfishness, and then follow the path of truth and goodness. According to Hindu Scriptures, by worshipping the '*shakti*' on these nine-days, householders attain the threefold powers, (physical, mental and spiritual), which help them live their lives as the gods direct.

The festival of Dussehra is noteworthy for both its moral and its cultural significance. People, irrespective of their creed, culture or religion, gather to vanquish all evil and unpleasant things and imbibe the goodness around them. The essence of the festival lies in its message: with devotion to the goddess it is possible to overcome all obstacles and emerge victorious and successful.

More information at ...

1. [Dussehr Info: Dussehra - Know About the Mega Festival of Happiness](#)
2. [UCLA: Culture/Festivals/Dussehra](#)
3. [I love India - Dussehra](#)
4. [Dussehra in Images](#)
5. [Calendarlabs - Dussehra](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 9 October, 2019

YOM KIPPUR – THE DAY OF ATONEMENT Jewish (The 10th day of Tishrei, the 7th Month of the Jewish Calendar)

This is the final day of the ten days of repentance, following on from Rosh Hashanah, and is the holiest day of the year in the Jewish calendar. The Torah calls it the 'Sabbath of Sabbaths', and it is marked by 'afflicting the soul' – chiefly expressed through a total fast that lasts for 25 hours. Jews spend the eve and most of the day in prayer in the synagogue, asking for divine forgiveness for past wrongs and resolving to improve in the future in their attempt to live a moral life. In the days before the festival they will have tried to set right any breakdown in their relationships with others. Now they ask the Almighty for forgiveness before the gates of heaven are closed and the record books are sealed, so that they may live throughout the coming year as He would wish.

Many Jews who observe no other religious customs refrain from work on this day, observe the fast and attend the lengthy synagogue services. On this uncomfortable day washing, bathing, anointing the body, sexual activity and wearing leather shoes or coats are all prohibited to those over 12 or 13 years of age, though dispensations are available for people in poor health or in childbirth. White clothing is worn to express purity, and some wear a white *kittel* reminiscent of the shroud that is used to bury the dead, but more importantly also reminiscent of the extremely simple costume of the High Priest when the Temple still stood in Jerusalem.. This is the only festival of the year when men wear their prayer shawls for evening worship.

The services are lengthy, and involve prostration and standing erect for up to an hour at a time. The Kol Nidre (All Vows) service on the eve of the festival encourages repentance for all types of sins, including for instance mistreatment or exploitation of others, arrogance, selfishness and gossip – the 'evil tongue' in its many forms. The closing service (Neilah) at the end of the period of fasting lasts for an hour, during which the doors of the Ark are kept open and accordingly all must stand. The Book of Jonah is read and a common greeting '*G'mar Chatimah Tovah*' (*May you finally be sealed for good*) is offered by all to each other. A long blast on the *shofar* concludes the main proceedings, followed as on Shabbat by the Havdalah (separation) ceremony, and finally a shared meal.

This is a time for making gifts to the poor (often via charities) in accordance with the instructions of the Torah and the Talmud, albeit nowadays in a spirit of generosity rather than as expiation for guilt – although for some the concept of the scapegoat or the sacrificial chicken that carry away our guilt may still survive.

Leviticus 16:4-34, 23:27-32.

a) pp 196-199; b) pp 12, 90-91, 97-99, 102-103, 109, 141.

More information at ...

1. [Jewish Virtual Library: Yom Kippur](#)
2. [USA Today: On Yom Kippur, Jews split on which shoes to choose](#)
3. [Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement](#)
4. [Greetings Cards for Yom Kippur](#)
5. [Jewfaq: Yom Kippur](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 13 October, 2019 – Sunday, 20 October, 2019

INTER FAITH WEEK OF PRAYER FOR WORLD PEACE National

Although it was a Christian initiative that led to the founding of the Week of Prayer for World Peace in 1974, it soon became an inter-faith activity, and now welcomes everyone, of all faith traditions or none, to take part.

Prayers from the literature of several different world religions are published each year in a special leaflet for use in temples, churches, synagogues and mosques in this week. This custom receives the support of members from many different religious communities. They also organise joint services, where all can come together and in their own words pray for peace in this world. 'The peace of the world must be prayed for by the faiths of the world.'

For those who want to persevere with the idea of praying with people of other faiths, three thoughts have been suggested: 'First, the different prayers that we say are said by our neighbours in the same town and the same street every week. In worshipping together on this day we simply bring under one roof what happens anyway under the same sky. Secondly, we are convinced that there is only one humanity that prays, and only one Divinity that we pray to, whatever different opinions we may have about that one Divinity. Thirdly we recognise that inter faith partnership does not itself imply agreement.'

Furthermore: 'The things we agree on are many, and precious. The things we disagree on are precious too. When we stand with a follower of another faith who is praying, whenever we can agree with the prayer, we give it our interior assent. Where we cannot agree, we withhold our interior assent. It is still good to stand with that person as a friend and as a partner for peace.'

More information at ...

1. [Week of Prayer for World Peace](#)
2. [Banner Cross Methodist Church: What is the Week of Prayer for World Peace?](#)
3. [Barnabas in Schools: Week of Prayer for World Peace](#)
4. [Images for World Peace and Prayer Day](#)
5. [Brahma Kumaris: Building Interfaith Bridges](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 14 October, 2019 – Monday, 21 October, 2019

SUKKOT - FEAST OF TABERNACLES OR BOOTHS Jewish

This is an eight day long harvest festival which commemorates the 40 years the Jews spent in the wilderness on the way from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. A temporary hut or a frail booth – called a *sukkah* – is built outside the house each year at this time for eating meals and for visits and socialising. In hot countries families may live in their *sukkah* during the festival. The roof has to be open in part to the elements, so that the stars may be visible through the gaps, and is covered with branches and leaves and decorated with fruit.

Spending time in the family's temporary *sukkah* recalls their newfound liberty in days gone by, an element that underlies many of the festivals Jews celebrate, constantly reiterating and revisiting the central narrative of the Jewish story, the Exodus from Egypt and the journey to the Promised Land. It also recalls the fragility of life – both during the Exodus and in the present day – and the fact that all creation is dependent on the goodness of the Almighty for its life and comfort. Extending hospitality to others, and especially to the needy, is a particular *Sukkot* custom.

Many synagogues build *sukkot* that are used for communal meals and celebration, since many homes have no room for a personal *sukkah*. In Israel, blocks of flats are frequently built with their balconies not directly above one another so that the balcony can be used to build a small *sukkah* which it will be properly open to the sky as required. On *each day of the festival* special sections of the Torah and the Prophets are read, including the instruction to dwell in booths. The book of Ecclesiastes is also read.

Four species of plant, the *lulav* (palm branch), the *etrog* (a yellow citrus fruit), three branches of the *hadass* (myrtle) and two of the *aravah* (willow) are used each day of the festival, the *etrog* in the left hand and the other branches, bound together, in the right. They are waved side by side in all four directions of the compass and up and down to demonstrate the universality of the Almighty, while reciting appropriate blessings. This follows the teaching of the Torah in Leviticus (23:40) 'On the first day, you will take for yourselves a fruit of a beautiful tree, palm branches, twigs of a braided tree and brook willows, and you will rejoice before the L-rd your G-d for seven days.' Above all else, this is a festival of rejoicing at the bounty enjoyed at harvest time as a gift from G-d by the people of Israel.

Leviticus 23:33-43.

a) pp 187-190; b) pp 90-91, 97-99, 109, vi.

NB The first two days (October 14, 15) and the last two days (Oct 20, 21) are full festival days when, for Orthodox Jews, work is not permitted.

More information at ...

1. [Jewish Virtual Library - Sukkot](#)
2. [Reform Judaism: Sukkot - Feast of Booths](#)
3. [A Succot Story for Children](#)
4. [Sukkot in Pictures and Photos](#)
5. [Jewfaq: Sukkot](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 14 October 2019

PAVARANA DAY *Buddhist*

The last day of the Rains Retreat (the Vassa) is known as Pavarana Day or 'Leaving the Vassa'. It is also known as 'Sangha Day'.

Pavarana means 'to invite' and on the following day monks who have completed the Retreat invite their fellows to admonish them for any failings. This is usually a positive occasion for the monastic community when they seek to let go of recent shortcomings and start afresh in their practice of the Way.

The three month long period (vassa) is often used by lay and monastic folk alike to make a variety of determinations: to take up a particular devotional or meditation practice, to challenge or renounce some old habit - like eating sugar or smoking or drinking coffee (or worse). In Asia this may even consist of lay folk taking temporary ordination for all or part of this time. The full moon of Pavarana marks the end of this period and is a time of celebration. For those who have maintained a strict practice it means they can relax a bit, having learnt something about their particular problem and not falling back into old habits.

The day after Pavarana Day is also the first day on which the *Kathina* may be held. For further information see the description given below on Anapanasati Day, the last day on which the *Kathina* may take place.

a) pp 42-43, 49-50, 52; b) p 29, 32, 33.

More information at ...

1. [Pavarana - Marking the end of the Rains Retreat](#)
2. [Buddha Space: Pavarana Day and 'Buddha Space'](#)
3. [Buddhamind - Festivals: Pavarana](#)
4. [Pavarana Day in Pictures](#)
5. [Little Bang Word Press: Pavarana Day](#)

Sunday, 20 October 2019

CONFERRING OF GURUSHIP ON THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB BY GURU GOBIND SINGH 1708 CE *Sikh*

On October 6th, 1708, the day before his death, Guru Gobind Singh (the Sikhs' tenth Guru, 1666 -1708) declared that, instead of having another human Guru, from now on Sikhs would regard the scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, as their Guru.

The composition known as the Adi Granth contains the *bani* (teaching) of six of the Gurus of the Sikh faith, along with some of the writings of certain Muslim *fakirs* and Hindu saints. It was compiled in this form in the year 1604, incorporating at a later stage the addition of a sacred composition dictated by Guru Tegh Bahadur.

The first copy of the Guru Granth Sahib was installed in the Harimandir (the Golden Temple in Amritsar) in 1604. The fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, compiled the book, which was written down by his uncle, Bhai Gurdas, and printed in Punjabi. The second (enlarged) edition was completed in 1705 by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. He added the hymns of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Guru, and a couplet of his own to the volume created a century earlier. Since then, the authorised version has been transcribed and printed a number of times. Its veneration is an article of faith with all Sikhs.

It is the only scripture of its kind which contains the songs, hymns and utterances of a wide variety of saints, sages and bards from differing traditions. Much of the volume carries the compositions of Hindu *bhaktas*, Muslim divines, Sufi poets and other God-intoxicated souls, whose hymns and couplets, while rendered in their own idiom, find a ready correspondence in the songs of the Sikh Gurus. Guru Arjan's purpose was to affirm the fundamental unity of all religions, and the unitary character of all mystic experience.

Then, in October, 1708, in a gurdwara at Nanded, on the banks of the Indian river Godawari, Guru Gobind Singh designated the Adi Granth as his successor, using in his address the words, '*Guru maneyo Granth*' (consider the Granth to be the Guru), affirming the text of the Granth as sacred and terminating the traditional line of human Gurus. Installed now as the 'Guru Granth Sahib', it became the central text of Sikhism, and the eternal Guru of all Sikhs. In this way he conferred Guruship on the Granth Sahib as the living Guru of the Khalsa, declaring in his speech that the *temporal* functions of the Guru would be performed by the Five Beloveds, the *Panj Pyares*, the leaders of the *Khalsa*; and that *spiritual* guidance would be given in future by the Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Gobind Singh prostrated himself as he offered his obeisance to the sacred Granth. He conferred Guruship on the Granth by walking around it five times and bowing his head before it. He declared that after him, the living Guru would be embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib. The Granth is now central to all Sikh worship and is said to incorporate the living spirit of the ten human Gurus. This gurdwara, Abchal Nagar Sahib gurdwara, is also the place where Guru Gobind Singh died the next day on October 7, 1708.

Guru Gobind Singh did not appoint any human successor in the line of human Guruship as had been the previous tradition. He declared the Guru Granth Sahib to be the ultimate source of authority and the eternal Guru of the Sikhs. Today the Sikh religion holds that in each of the succeeding Gurus, the spirit of Guru Nanak, the first Guru was incarnate, and wherever Sikhs assembled, he would be present. Today the sacred Granth is installed in all Sikh holy places of worship and is treated as the presiding presence of the Guru.

A building becomes a gurdwara ('house of the Guru') when the Guru Granth Sahib is kept inside. The Guru is placed on a raised throne-like platform (*takht*) with a decorated canopy above it. Every morning the Guru is taken out from its special rest room and carried on the head to the centre of the gurdwara, where it is placed on the throne. Devotees offer gifts as they bow to the Granth, whenever they enter the Gurdwara.

More information at ...

1. [Sikh Wiki: Guru Maneo Granth \(Consider the Granth to be the Guru\)](#)
2. [Sikh Missionary Society: Sikhism-Takhts-Sri Hazoor Sahib](#)
3. [Sri-Guru Granth Sahib - Holy Book](#)
4. [Images of Conferring of Guruship on the Guru Granth Sahib](#)
5. [Structure of the Guru Granth Sahib](#)
6. [Sikh Net - Siri Guru Granth Sahib](#)

Tuesday, 22 October 2019

SIMCHAT TORAH Jewish

This festival, whose name means 'Rejoicing in the *Torah*', marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading from the *Torah*. As the reading of the Law in the synagogue should be continuous, a second scroll is begun again as soon as the final portion of the *Torah* has been read from the first scroll; so, as the reading from Deuteronomy ends, with the next breath, Genesis begins without a break - the *Torah* is a circle that never ends. All the *Torah* scrolls are paraded around the synagogue, with children dancing and singing, as do many of the adults, giving as many people as possible the honour of carrying a *Torah* scroll. Progressive Jews frequently celebrate this one day earlier, combining it with the eighth day of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret.

The *Torah* scrolls are removed from the ark and given to members of the congregation to hold; then they march around the synagogue and everyone kisses the *Torah* scrolls as they pass. This ceremony is known as *hakafot*, which means "to march around" in Hebrew. Once the *Torah* holders return to the ark everyone forms a circle around them and dances with them.

There are seven *hakafot* in total, so as soon as the first dance is completed the scrolls are handed to other members of the congregation and the ritual begins anew. In some synagogues, it is also popular for children to hand out candy to everyone.

During Simchat Torah services the next morning, many congregations will divide into smaller prayer groups, each of which will use one of the synagogue's *Torah* scrolls. Dividing the service up this way gives every person in attendance the opportunity to bless the *Torah*. In some traditional communities, only the men or pre-bar mitzvah boys accompanied by adults bless the *Torah* (post bar mitzvah aged boys are counted among the men). In other communities, women and girls are also allowed to take part.

Because Simchat Torah is such a happy day, services are not as formal as at other times. Some congregations will drink liquor during the service; others will make a game out of singing so loud that they drown out the cantor's voice. Overall the holiday is a unique and joyful experience.

The association of joy with the reading and study of *Torah* recurs in much of Jewish worship, and celebrations such as Shabbat, Shavuot and Pesach all bear witness to the centrality of *Torah* to Jewish life.

a) pp 191-193; b) pp 99-100, 109, vi.

More information at ...

1. [About Judaism: Simchat Torah](#)
2. [Jewfaq: Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah](#)
3. [Simchat Torah - Activities for Kids](#)
4. [Simchat Torah: Arts and Crafts](#)
5. [Huffington Post: Simchat Torah: Dates, Dances, Customs, Shemini Atzeret Explained](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 27 October 2019 – Thursday, 31 October 2019

DIVALI / DIWALI / DEEPAVALI Hindu

Deepawali or Diwali, the Hindu new year's day, is the biggest and the brightest of all Hindu festivals. It is the festival of lights: *deep* means 'light' and '*avali*' a row', so *divali* is 'a row of lights'. It coincides with the darkest night (15th) of the lunar month of Kartik, which usually falls in late October or early November. The festival is marked by four days of celebrations, which literally illuminate the country with their brilliance and dazzle with their joy. Traditionally every house will set out tiny clay pots with wicks and oil all around their home, and in locations where Diwali is a national holiday, public places are also lit up with beautiful candles and lamps. Families exchange gifts at this time and share a special dinner with relatives and friends.

Each of the four days in the festival of Diwali reflects a different tradition. All four view the festival as a celebration of life and of joy, and they all share a powerful sense of the value of goodness and virtue. Various legends point to its origin. Some believe it to be the celebration of the marriage of the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, with Lord Vishnu. Others view it as a celebration of her birthday, since Lakshmi is said to have been born on the new moon day of Kartik; many see it as a day when she fulfils the wishes of her devotees.

Diwali also commemorates the return from exile of Lord Rama (along with his wife, Sita, his loyal brother, Lakshman, and his chief supporter, Hanuman), culminating in the vanquishing of the demon-king Ravana. In joyous celebration of the return of their king, the people of Ayodhya, the capital of Rama, illuminated the kingdom with earthen *diyas* (oil lamps) and bursts of fire crackers.

In Bengal, the festival is dedicated to the worship of Mother Kali, the dark goddess of strength. Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, the symbol of auspiciousness and wisdom, is also worshipped in Hindu homes on this day. In Jainism, Deepawali has added significance as marking the great event of Lord Mahavira's attaining the eternal bliss of *nirvana*.

All of the simple rituals of Diwali have a significance and a story to tell. Homes are illuminated with lights and noisy firecrackers fill the skies as an expression of human respect for the gods, whose help is sought in the quest for the attainment of health, wealth, knowledge, peace, and prosperity.

For Hindu families this is a time to clean their homes from top to bottom, so that when the lamps are lit their houses will be suitable for Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and knowledge, to enter their home and bless them with good fortune for the coming year. It is traditional for families to make offerings to the goddess, chiefly of fruit, rice pudding, flowers and other assorted gifts.

In addition to that, the exchange of presents during Diwali has become a mandatory part of the celebration. Friends, families, colleagues all share Diwali gifts with each other as an expression of affection. A special feast is shared with delicious food that includes different varieties of sweets.

Indians love colours and this is reflected in various ways. Rangoli is one example, a unique form of art work based on beautiful and symbolic designs and patterns. These are colourfully presented all across India, and are usually created on floors or open spaces.

On this day, Hindu merchants in North India open their new account books for the year and pray for success and prosperity during the coming months. Husbands buy new garments for the family. Employers purchase new clothes for their employees, and the wealthy feed the poor.

The tradition of gambling on Diwali is also legendary: it is believed that on this day the goddess Parvati played dice with her husband Lord Shiva. She decreed that whoever gambled on Diwali night would prosper throughout the ensuing year.

In each legend, myth, and story the significance of Deepavali lies in the victory of good over evil. It is a time when everyone forgets and forgives the wrongs done by others during the previous year. When the oil lamps are lit, there is an air of freedom, festivity, and friendliness everywhere.

More information at ...

1. [About Hinduism: Diwali - Festival of Lights - Light Up Your Life!](#)
2. [Diwali - The festival of lights](#)
3. [Primary Homework Help: Diwali](#)
4. [Diwali, the Festival of Lights - in Pictures](#)
5. [Diwali for Kidz](#)

Sunday, 27 October 2019

DIVALI / DEEPAVALI Jain

Divali has a special significance for Jains, as on this day in 527 BCE Mahavira gave his last teachings and at midnight attained ultimate liberation. Today temples and shrines are decorated, often with toys and images of animals, and Jains meditate on the teaching he gave on this day. Many devout followers fast for the two days of Divali, following the example of Mahavira. Lamps are lit and children are given sweets by their parents, though the songs, dances and noise of Hindu celebrations are not common amongst the Jain communities. Jain business people traditionally start their accounting year from the day after Divali.

The examples set by Mahavira and his teachings are central to all Jain belief and practice, so Divali is a time for meditation and penance, and for generously caring for all living beings. The focus of meditation is usually based on his last discourse, which became famous as the *Uttaradhyayan Sutra*, sometimes known as the *Vipak Sutra*, which has become seminal for much of Jain teaching and belief.

More information at ...

1. [Diwali in Jainism](#)
2. [Huffington Post: A Jain Perspective on Diwali](#)
3. [Dates and key events of Jain Diwali](#)
4. [Jain Diwali in pictures](#)
5. [Jagran Post: Special way of celebrating Diwali by Jains](#)

Sunday, 27 October 2019

***BANDHI CHHOR DIVAS / DIVALI* Sikh**

Sikhs celebrate Bandhi Chhor Divas / Divali since Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, was released from Gwalior prison in Madhya Pradesh on this day in 1619 CE. The day is known as Bandhi Chhor Divas (Prisoner Release Day) because 52 imprisoned princes (*Bandhi*) were released (*Chhor*) by him on this day (*Divas*). It is celebrated in October-November by both Sikhs and Hindus.

The Mughal Emperor Jehangir had long had an antagonistic relationship with this new religious community, now rising within his kingdom - so much so that he had ordered and carried out the execution of Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs and Guru Hargobind's predecessor. During the time of the 6th Guru, Sikhism had become the fastest growing religion. Unfortunately, religious leaders and the Emperor became fearful and jealous, so they ordered the Guru to be detained in Gwalior fort in 1612 CE.

Rather than being a sanctuary of tranquility, Gwalior Fort was really a prison where enemies of the state, including a number of Rajput princes were detained. On entering the fort, the Guru was greeted by 52 Indian princes. They had been stripped of their kingdoms by the Emperor and were being ill-treated, with insufficient food and no clear clothes to wear. True to his nature, the Guru inspired them to join him in daily prayers and did his best to improve their conditions. In time, they came to respect and honour him.

Jahangir was alarmed by the Guru's popularity in the fort. In addition to this a group of prominent Sikhs campaigned in Delhi to secure his release. Troubled with fearful visions, and the remembrance that Guru Hargobind had once saved his life, the Emperor gave orders for him to be allowed his freedom. But when his release was offered him by the Emperor Jehangir, the Guru rejected the offer unless the 52 imprisoned Hindu princes were also given their freedom. To meet the Emperor's churlish condition that only those who could hold on to his cloak could leave the prison with him, the Guru had a coat made for himself with long panels to which all 52 could cling. The princes each grasped a panel, 26 on the right and 26 on the left as they left. In this way, the Guru secured the release of all his fellow inmates.

Several days later, when Guru Hargobind reached Amritsar, the Hindu festival of light, Divali, was being celebrated. In their joy at seeing their Guru again, the people lit up the whole city with candles, lights and lamps. After almost four hundred years this tradition continues in Amritsar, and on this day the Harimandir is aglow with thousands of candles and floating lamps, strings of lights decorate the domes, and fireworks burst in the sky. Elsewhere, all around the world, Sikhs commemorate Bandi Chhor Divas, Prisoner Release Day, by lighting hundreds of candles in the evening around the gurdwara, singing shabads composed by Bhai Gurdas in praise of Guru Hargobind, preparing a festive *langar*, and basking in the spirit of joy, freedom and festivity. It is a festival marked by gifts of new clothes, presents and sweets - a true **'Festival of Liberation'**.

a) pp 237-239; b) pp 125-126, vii.

More information at ...

1. [Sikh Net: Bandi Chhor Divas](#)
2. [Sikh Dharma: the story of Bandi Chhor Divas](#)
3. [Sikh Guru: Divali/Bandi Chhor Divas \(Prisoner Release Day\)](#)
4. [Storyboard of Sikh Divali](#)
5. [Sikh Perspective on Divali](#)

Tuesday, 29 October, 2019

ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF THE BAB Baha'i

The *Bab* (the title means 'the Gate') was born in Shiraz, Persia in 1819. He was the prophet-herald of the Baha'i community and called people to religious renewal and to await the coming of a new messenger from God - 'the one whom God shall make manifest'. Baha'is believe that this latter figure was Baha'u'llah (the title means 'Glory of God'). Baha'is observe this holy day by abstaining from work. Their gatherings normally involve prayers, devotional readings, music and fellowship.

Bahá'ís believe that God causes very special people to be born at different times in history and in different places in order to 'educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man...' (Abdu'l-Bahá, son of Bahá'u'lláh). The Bahá'í Faith refers to such people as 'Manifestations of God' and, for Bahá'ís, Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, and Muhammad are all held to be Manifestations of God, as were untold others whose names and stories are now lost. But, for the era in which we are now living, Baha'is believe God sent two Manifestations of himself in the persons of the Báb ('Ali Muhammad Shirāzi - October 20, 1819 - July 9, 1850) and Bahá'u'lláh (Mírzá Ḥusayn-`Alí Núrí - 12 November 1817 - 29 May 1892) both of whom were born in Persia / Iran).

The birthdays of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are now celebrated as the Twin Holy Birthdays on two consecutive days each year and these are two days that Bahá'ís will wish to be absent from work or school. (In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the most holy of the Bahá'í scriptures, Bahá'u'lláh wrote that his birthday and that of Báb "are accounted as one in the sight of God")

a) p 26; b) pp 19-20.

More information at ...

1. [Tacoma Baha'i: The Anniversary of the Birth of the Bab - October 20th](#)
2. [Baha'i Blog: The Life of the Bab](#)
3. [Suggested Devotional Program for the Birth of the Bab](#)
4. [Susan Gammage: The Birth of the Bab - Holy Day Programme](#)
5. [Bella Online - The Voice of Women: Birth of the Bab](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 30 October, 2019

ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Baha'í

Bahá'u'lláh is held by many of his followers to be the founder of the Baha'í faith. He was born the eldest son of a Persian nobleman in Tehran, Persia, in 1817. For Bahá'ís, the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh is a Holy Day celebrating the rebirth of the world through the love of God.

`Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh, stated that during this holy day the community should rejoice together to increase the unity of the community. Bahá'ís usually observe the holy day with community gatherings where prayers are shared and the birth of Bahá'u'lláh is celebrated. Bahá'u'lláh stated that in communities where the majority of the population are Shi'a Muslims, such as Iran, his followers should exercise caution in celebrating the twin birthdays so that they do not upset the majority of the population who are mourning during the Islamic month of Muharram.

The birthdays of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are now celebrated as the Twin Holy Birthdays on two consecutive days each year and these are two days that Bahá'ís will wish to be absent from work or school. (In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the most holy of the Bahá'í scriptures, Bahá'u'lláh wrote that his birthday and that of the Báb 'are accounted as one in the sight of God')

Bahá'ís believe that God causes special people to be born at different times in history and in different places in order to 'educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man...' (Abdu'l-Bahá, son of Bahá'u'lláh). The Bahá'í Faith refers to such people as 'Manifestations of God', for Bahá'ís, Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, and Muhammad were all Manifestations of God, as were many others whose names and stories are lost. But God has also sent two Manifestations of God in the persons of the Báb ('Ali Muhammad Shirāzi - October 20, 1819 – July 9, 1850) and Bahá'u'lláh (Mírzá Ḥusayn-`Alí Núrí -12 November 1817 – 29 May 1892) both born in Persia (now Iran).

a) pp 26, 166; b) pp 19-21.

More information at ...

1. [123 Holiday: Birth of Baha'u'llah](#)
2. [Wikipedia - Birth of Baha'u'llah](#)
3. [Baha'i Invitation: Birth of Baha'u'llah - The Lord of the Age - Who is Baha'u'llah?](#)
4. [Bahauallah.org: The Life of Baha'u'llah - A photographic narrative](#)
5. [Baha'i Blog: The Birth of Baha'u'llah and the Spirit of the Age](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 31 October, 2019

SAMHAIN (pronounced Sow-in) *Wiccan Pagan*

SAMHUINN *Druid*

For all pagan communities the wheel of the year is seen to begin at Samhain. This is the Celtic New Year, when the veil between the world of the dead and the world of the living is said to be at its thinnest. Samhain is the festival of death when pagans remember and honour those who have gone before. Fires are lit and 'dead wood' is burned before stepping into the darkness of winter. Pagans celebrate death as part of life. This is not a time of fear, but a time to understand more deeply that life and death are part of a sacred whole.

At Samhain the veil between the spirits and souls of loved ones are said to have more power and the ability to visit us. This is the time of year for remembering and honouring the dead, and many people will leave a plate of food and a glass of wine out for wandering sprits. (This is often called the Feast of Hecate). Samhain is also a time for personal reflection, and for recognizing our faults and flaws and creating a method for rectifying them.

It is generally celebrated on October 31st, but some traditions prefer November 1st. It is one of the two "spirit-nights" of the year, the other being Beltaine. It is a magical interval when the mundane laws of time and space are temporarily suspended, and the thin veil between the worlds is lifted. Communicating with ancestors and departed loved ones is easy at this time, for they journey through this world on their way to the 'Summer Lands'. It is a time to study the Dark Mysteries and to honour the Dark Mother and the Dark Father, symbolized by the aged Crone and her fading Consort.

Originally the 'Feast of the Dead' was celebrated in Celtic countries by leaving food offerings on altars and doorsteps for the 'wandering dead'. Today many pagans still carry out this tradition. Single candles are lit and left in a window to help guide the spirits of ancestors and loved ones home. Extra chairs are set to the table and around the hearth for the unseen guest. Apples are buried along roadsides and paths for spirits who are lost or have no descendants to provide for them. Turnips are hollowed out and carved to look like protective spirits, for this is a night of magic and chaos. The Wee Folk became very active, pulling pranks on unsuspecting humans. Travelling after dark is not advised. People dress in white (like ghosts) and wear disguises made of straw, or sometimes dress as the opposite gender in the hope that they might perhaps be able to fool the Nature spirits.

This is the time when the cattle and other livestock are slaughtered for eating in the ensuing winter months. Any crops still in the field on Samhain are considered taboo, and left as offerings to the spirits. Bonfires are built, (originally called bone-fires, for after feasting, the bones were thrown in the fire as offerings for healthy and plentiful livestock in the New Year) and stones are marked with peoples' names. Then they are thrown into the fire, to be retrieved the next morning. The condition of the retrieved stone foretells that person's fortune in the coming year. Hearth fires are also lit in the home from the village bonfire to ensure unity, and the ashes are spread over the harvested fields.

During the eighth century of the Common Era, the Catholic Church decided to use November 1st as All Saints Day. This was a sensible step since the local pagans were already celebrating the day, so it made sense to use it as a church holiday. All Saints' became the festival to honour any saint who didn't already have a day of his or her own. The mass which was said on All Saints' was called All Hallow Mass – the mass of all those who are hallowed. The night before naturally became known as All Hallows Eve, and eventually morphed from Samhain into what is now called Halloween.

a) pp 26, 166; b) pp 19-21.

More information at ...

1. [123 Holiday: Birth of Baha'u'llah](#)
2. [Wikipedia - Birth of Baha'u'llah](#)
3. [Baha'i Invitation: Birth of Baha'u'llah - The Lord of the Age - Who is Baha'u'llah?](#)
4. [Bahauallah.org: The Life of Baha'u'llah - A photographic narrative](#)
5. [Baha'i Blog: The Birth of Baha'u'llah and the Spirit of the Age](#)

Thursday, 31 October 2019

HALLOWEEN

WINTER NIGHTS *Heathen*

Halloween is a holiday celebrated on the night of October 31. The word Halloween is a shortening of All Hallows Evening, also known as Hallowe'en or All Hallows' Eve. Traditional activities include trick-or-treating, bonfires, costume parties, visiting 'haunted houses', and carving jack-o-lanterns. Irish and Scottish immigrants carried versions of the tradition to North America in the nineteenth century. Other western countries embraced the holiday in the late twentieth century including Ireland, the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom as well as of Australia and New Zealand.

More information at ...

1. [Halloween History](#)
2. [Time and Date: Halloween in the United States](#)
3. [British Council/Learn British Kids: Halloween](#)
4. [Winter Nights Festival: About Vetrnaetr](#)
5. [Wyrddwords/Vispa: Winter Nights](#)

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NOVEMBER 2019

Ben Helfgott

Here is the eleventh of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

Born in November 1929 in Poland, Ben Helfgott was 10 years old when Germany invaded and for the next five years he and his family experienced the depravity of Nazi persecution of anyone Jewish, including life in concentration camps and the killing of most of his family. Even with Hitler defeated, his Jewishness was still unpopular in Poland; he was therefore glad to be welcomed as a refugee to recuperate in the English Lake district. His new life in North London involved rebuilding physical strength and secondary school success – both evidence of his determination to demonstrate that living can be made better. Within ten years he had established himself as a weightlifting champion – initially at local and national levels but then Olympian. Many of his activities since have been centred on the themes of Holocaust education and promoting the interests of others.

<http://www.jewsinsports.org/Olympics.asp?sport=olympics&ID=37>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/27/holocaust-memorial-day-ben-helfgott>

<http://www.auschwitz.dk/Helfgott.htm>

<https://www.si.com/vault/2015/07/10/106211238/the-strength-to-carry-on>

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/08/12/holocaust-survivor-olympic-weightlifter-ben-helfgott-pride-british_n_7978884.html

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6us5OzroX8>

<https://www.mixcloud.com/desertislanddiscsarchive2005-2/ben-helfgott>

<https://thingssimonloves.com/2015/01/27/photos-of-my-father>

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 1 November 2019

ALL SAINTS' DAY (All Hallows', originally All Martyrs') *Christian (Western Churches)*
(*The Catholic Church in England and Wales moves this festival to the nearest Sunday if it falls on a Saturday or a Monday.*)

This day provides a chance to offer thanks for the work and witness of all Christian saints, recognising that not all are known or specially celebrated. Many churches stress this day rather than Hallowe'en, which falls the day before, by holding events especially designed for children.

a) pp 99-100; b) pp 48-49, 53-54, 57.

More information at ...

1. [Church Year: The Solemnity of All Saints Day](#)
2. [About Catholicism: All Saints Day](#)
3. [All Saints \(or All Hallows\) Celebration and Games](#)
4. [Images for All Saints Day](#)
5. [Spanish traditions for All Saints' Day](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 2 November 2019

ALL SOULS' DAY *Christian*

On this day in particular the departed are remembered and prayers on their behalf are offered. From earliest times Christians have prayed for the souls of the dead. In the year 998, All Souls, 'the faithful departed', began to be remembered in the Church calendar on this day.

More information at ...

1. [About Catholicism: All Souls Day](#)
2. [BBC Religions: All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day](#)
3. [All Souls Day](#)
4. [Images for All Souls Day](#)
5. [Fisheaters: All Souls Day](#)

Saturday, 2 November, 2019

ANNIVERSARY OF THE CROWNING OF HAILE SELASSIE I *Rastafarian*

One of the holiest days of the Rastafarian year, it celebrates Haile Selassie's accession to the Ethiopian throne. It cements the role Ethiopia plays at the heart of Rastafarian tradition.

Amongst followers of Rastafarianism, a religion which developed in the 1930s in Jamaica under the influence of Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement, Haile Selassie I is regarded as a messiah who will lead the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora to freedom. The date of his coronation is celebrated by believers throughout the world as one of the most sacred days of the Rastafarian calendar.

Haile Selassie's birthname was Tafari Mekonnen. When he was crowned Emperor in 1930, he assumed the name Haile Selassie, "Might of the Trinity", as well as the title "King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah."

He reigned until 1974, when he was deposed in a military coup following famines and economic turmoil in the country. Put under house arrest by the military authorities, he died in 1975, reputedly of natural causes, although many believe he was killed on the order of the military. Rastafarians themselves believe that Selassie is still alive, and that his widely reported death is part of a conspiracy to discredit their religion. In the end, the dissent which toppled his government came from the same group of elite intellectuals to which he had afforded support and education, in opposition to the influence of feudal tradition.

Custodianship of the popular opinion of Haile Selassie has gradually moved towards the Rasta movement, as the movement itself has gained more freedom, not least through the spread of reggae music. This tradition has proved very efficient in disseminating basic knowledge of Selassie into popular conscience, especially in the Caribbean. Just as old Ethiopians swear on Selassie as *Janhoy* (meaning the Elephant, as in the Emperor who is greater than the King of the jungle, the Lion), throughout the English-speaking parts of the region it is common to substitute 'God knows' with 'Selassie knows'. Iconic images of His Imperial Majesty can be found virtually anywhere

More information at ...

1. [The Dread Library: Crowning of Haile Selassie I](#)
2. [The Coronation of Haile Selassie I](#)
3. [BBC: Religions/Rastafari/Beliefs/Haile Selassie](#)
4. [Photos of the Coronation of Haile Selassie I](#)
5. [A Celebration of Women: 84th Anniversary of the Crowning of Haile Selassie](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 10 November, 2019

REMEMBRANCE DAY *National*

The Sunday nearest to Armistice Day, devoted to remembering the dead of the two World wars and subsequent wars.

More information at ...

1. [History Extra: In focus - Remembrance Day Traditions](#)
2. [The Guardian: Remembrance Sunday - call for Church of England to ditch Cenotaph role](#)
3. [The Story behind the Remembrance Poppy](#)
4. [Poppies at the Tower of London](#)
5. [The War Poetry Web: Poems for Remembrance Day and Peace Events](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 10 November 2019 - Sunday 17 November 2019

INTER FAITH WEEK

Held in the second week of November, Inter Faith Week aims to strengthen good interfaith relations, increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities, and increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs.

Central to these aims is celebrating and building on the contribution which members of different faith and non-faith communities make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society.

The Week, in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, is led and supported by the Inter Faith Network for the UK but is community-led, with organisations of all types holding their own events. Further information is available on the Inter Faith website, including event information and resources for organisers. 2019 will be the 11th Inter Faith Week in England and Wales.

The Inter Faith Network's member bodies include national faith community representative bodies; national, regional and local interfaith organisations; and educational and academic bodies with a focus on interfaith or multi-faith issues.

Scottish Interfaith Week is led by Interfaith Scotland, and information can be found on its website – see 5. below.

1. [The Inter Faith Network home page](#)
2. [Inter-Faith Week info](#)
3. [Inter Faith Week Toolkit](#)
4. [Inter Faith Week resources for schools](#)
5. [Scottish Interfaith Week](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 10 November 2019

MILAD UL-NABI / BIRTHDAY OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD Muslim (Sunni)

Observed by Sunni Muslims on 12th Rabi' Al-Awwal (November 10 in 2019), and by the majority of Shi'a Muslims five days later on 17th Rabi' Al-Awwal (November 14 in 2019) (though Nizari Ismaili (Shi'a) Muslims, who are followers of the Aga Khan, celebrate this on the same date as Sunnis, whereas Dawoodi Bohra Ismailis celebrate at the same time as other Shi'a).

The day is widely celebrated within the Muslim world as in the UK to mark the birth of the Prophet, and is a public holiday in a number of Muslim countries. In the sub-continent of India and certain Arab countries like Egypt, the celebration starts with readings from the Qur'an, followed by discussion of the birth, life and message of the Prophet, and poetry and songs in his praise. There are also lectures and storytelling. The most important part of Eid Milad-un-Nabi is focusing upon the character of the Prophet, his bravery and wisdom, his teachings, sufferings, and how he forgave even his most bitter enemies.

In many cities of the Muslim world the day is marked with processions and flag waving under a huge decoration of lights. Those Muslims who celebrate this festival do so joyfully. Muslim parents tell stories of the Prophet's life to their children. Some Muslims donate to charity. Families gather together, feasts are arranged and food is served to invited guests and to the poor.

There are only restricted festivities on Milad un-Nabi because the same day also marks the anniversary of the death of the Prophet. In the UK Muslims often celebrate at the mosque, but some refuse to observe the Prophet's birthday, claiming that celebrating birthdays or death anniversaries is a non-Islamic innovation, never celebrated by the Prophet, but introduced more than 600 years after his death. Tradition is not clear as to the date of the Prophet's birth.

a) pp 230-231; b) pp 119-120.

More information at ...

1. [Islamic Supreme Council - Mawlid un Nabi](#)
2. [Celebrating Mawlid un Nabi - any proof?](#)
3. [BBC Milad un Nabi](#)
4. [Mawlid al Nabi - through festival cards](#)
5. [Milad un Nabi - Legal and Religious Status](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 12 November 2019

The year 2019 marks the 550th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak

BIRTHDAY OF GURU NANAK (1469 CE) *Sikh*

Although the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak, was born in April 1469, his birth anniversary (one of Sikhs' most widely celebrated *gurpurbs*) is still generally celebrated on the full moon day of the lunar month of Kartik. As is the case with all other *gurpurbs*, an *akhand path* (a complete, unbroken reading of the Guru Granth Sahib) commences two days earlier so that it ends on the morning of the festival. Sikhs gather at the gurdwara for hymn-singing (*kirtan*) and to hear *kathas* (homilies) and share the *langar* (free meal). The gurdwara may be illuminated and street processions take place too, culminating in some cases, as at Baisakhi, in the washing and redressing of the *nishan*, the flag and the flagpole erected outside each gurdwara.

The name "Nanak" was used by all subsequent Gurus while penning down their own spiritual revelations, recorded now in the holy scripture called the Guru Granth Sahib. So the second Sikh Guru, Guru Angad Dev Ji is also called the "Second Nanak" or "Nanak II". It is believed by the Sikhs that all subsequent Gurus carried the same message as that of Guru Nanak and so they have used the name 'Nanak' in their holy text instead of their own name and hence are all understood to carry the divine 'Light of Nanak'.

Although each of the ten human Gurus shares a common nature and equal honour, Guru Nanak is fêted as the one who initiated the Sikh tradition and determined its direction for the future. His creativity and humanity became landmarks for those who follow his example.

a) pp 240-242, 244; b) pp 122-123, 126.

More information at ...

1. [Guru Nanak](#)
2. [Guru Nanak Jayanti](#)
3. [SPCK - Assemblies Org UK: The birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji - A Sikh celebration](#)
4. [Guru Nanak in Images](#)
5. [Times of India: Guru Nanak Jayanti](#)

Tuesday, 12 November 2019

LOY KRATONG Buddhist

Loy Kratong is celebrated in most of the village and town temples in Thailand and often coincides with the local temple's Kathina Day observance of Anapanasati. The festival takes place on the full moon night of the twelfth lunar month when the water level is high and the climate is cooler. This is usually in November when the full-moon lights up the sky, at the end of the rainy season. The festival indicates a close bond between Thai culture and the creative use of the recent heavy rainfall.

Before the festival, small lotus shaped baskets are made out of bread or the bark of a banana tree or rubber plant leaves, all items that will degrade naturally in the water, and these are elaborately decorated with folded banana leaves or lotus flowers in intricate, towering designs. Into these are placed incense sticks, candles, betel nuts and sometimes a small coin. They are then launched on rivers, canals, ponds or the sea. The sight of thousands of *krathongs* with their flickering candles sending a thousand pinpoints of light far into the horizon is a truly magical sight.

With them goes a wish for good luck, offered to propitiate the spirits of the water. The floating of a *krathong* is intended to wash away ill fortune as well as to express apologies to Khongkha or Ganga, the River Goddess for misuse or pollution of her domain. Captive eels and turtles are frequently released into the water at this time in her honour.

Hundreds of *krathongs* are for sale around the main Loy Krathong festivity areas. Often children will make their own versions at school or with their family. They may share in contests in school to see who can craft the most beautiful and artistic float. If your candle stays alight until your *krathong* disappears out of sight, it is said to mean a year of good luck, and couples can get an insight into the future of their relationships by watching whether their *krathongs* float together or drift apart.

In recent years Thais have become more creative in their craft, and design the *krathongs* from coconut shells, flowers, baked bread, potato slices, some even breaking with the conventional lotus leaf shape in favour of turtles and other sea creatures. On the other hand the base of the *krathong* often tends currently to be made from synthetic materials and, despite efforts to ban environmentally unfriendly floats, rivers and waterways are often covered with unsightly pieces of styrofoam the next morning.

Loy Krathong vies for the title of most important Thai holiday festival with Songkran, which is held in April. The grandest Loy Krathong celebrations are held in the northern city of Chiang Mai. Large floats are drawn through the streets, fashioned as giant *krathongs* each with their own theme. Many of the celebrants on the floats dress in regal Thai costumes or as mythical Thai beings, and beauty queens sometimes wave to the crowds.

The history behind the festival is complex, and Thais celebrate for many reasons. The main rice harvest season has ended and it is time to thank the Water Goddess for a year's worth of her abundant supply. Some believe that this is the time symbolically to 'float away' all the anger and grudges and ill fortune people have been holding inside themselves, and including a fingernail or a lock of hair is seen as a way of letting go of the dark side of oneself, to start a new year free of negative feelings.

More information at ...

1. [History of Loy Kratong](#)
2. [Loy Krathong in Contemporary Thailand](#)
3. [Thailand for Children - Loy Kratong](#)
4. [Loy Kratong and Yee Peng - baskets and lanterns that float away](#)
5. [Celebrating Loy Kratong in Bangkok](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

***Tuesday, 12 November 2019**

***ANAPANASATI DAY* Buddhist**

Anapanasati day, which is observed by monks in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, is marked by two different ceremonies: one falls on the day after the final day of the three months long Rains Retreat; the other falls on the same day or at some time during the month that follows.

The first is the 'Invitation' or '*Pavarana*' ceremony (see above), usually held towards the end of October. On the same day or up to a month later comes the *Kathina* ceremony. *Anapanasati* is the last day on which the *Kathina* ceremony may be observed.

This ceremony, the 'Invitation', takes place at the very end of the Rains Retreat when the monks and nuns meet together and invite one another to point out each other's faults, as they have been observed during the Retreat. Its purpose is to help them in purifying themselves. A monk (*Bhikkhu*) has to be open to any criticism from colleagues or from lay people he (or she) has met regarding his/her behaviour.

Being open to criticism in this manner was a way of life the Buddha himself inaugurated. Since then the monks of the *Sangha* need to be sensitive to complaints made by others in order to win their respect and to encourage them to learn and progress in the *Dhamma* (teaching). In particular they have to take note of the remarks made by their fellow monks. It is a kind of check-and-balance system between individual *Bhikkhus* as well as between the senior and the junior monks.

The 'Invitation' Ceremony is important ceremonially as well as spiritually. Without it there cannot be a proper *Kathina* robe-offering – any gifts of robes will only be the ordinary robe-offerings which often follow the Retreat, with no advantage or benefit to the monks themselves.

The second ceremony of Anapanasati falls on or after the final day of the three months long Rains Retreat, after cloth has been presented to the *Sangha* (the community of monks and nuns) by members of the lay Buddhist community. This is made into a *Kathina* robe by sewing patches of the cloth together. The robe is then offered by the monks present to a particular monk, usually an especially deserving or virtuous one, in a thoughtful ceremony conducted by four of his colleagues.

The word '*Kathina*' is Pali in origin. It means a frame used in sewing robes in the period when the Buddha lived and taught in India. The *Kathina* ceremony is necessarily a monastic one, but the cost of producing and dyeing the robe is usually supported by the generous donations of local devotees. The laity are able to gain merit for themselves by observing the ceremony.

Throughout the four following months the monk who receives the robe enjoys the relaxation of five minor rules (out of the 220 that normally apply during and after the Retreat). These mainly relate to travel and the receipt of alms. Normally a *Bhikkhu*, whether senior or junior, has to inform his fellow monks who live in the same temple before he goes out. Once he has received the *Kathina*-robe he can choose whether to do so or not. He also has less restriction on where he travels. Usually he has to carry all the three pieces of his/her robe wherever he goes, but now he can now leave one behind if he wishes. He can also accept other robes if offered during the period of four months.

At the heart of *Anapanasati*, which means 'mindfulness of breathing', is a form of Buddhist meditation initially taught by Gautama Buddha. It is described in several *suttas* (discourses delivered by the Buddha) including the *Anapanasati Sutta*. It originated when the Buddha announced in advance one year that he would speak at the end of the Rains. This allowed a large number of monks, elders, and teachers to come together. He praised their various practices within the assembly, and then explained the importance to them of 'mindfulness of breathing in and out', and how it can bring 'knowledge and liberation.' Mindfulness, meditation and breath control have since come to be at the heart of Theravada Buddhism.

a) pp 43, 48-50, 52; b) pp 29, 31-33, 37, 141.

More information at ...

1. [Anapanasati Sutta: Mindfulness of Breathing](#)
2. [Kathina Ceremony: Historical and Spiritual Significance](#)
3. [Vipassana Research Institute: Anapana for Children](#)
4. [Anapanasati Breathing Meditation](#)
5. [Anapanasati - Mindfulness with Breathing In and Out](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 15 November, 2019

SHISHI-GO-SAN (Seven-Five-Three) *Japanese*

Girls of seven, boys of five and girls of three are dressed up in new clothes and taken to a Shinto shrine to pray for their future well-being. As is the case with Hinamatsuri, the family's care for children and their upbringing is a central aspect of Japanese family life.

As part of the festival, girls are dressed in kimonos while boys wear haori jackets and hakama trousers, for the celebration, and visit the shrine with their families to participate in a Shinto purification ceremony to pray for a long and happy life and to mark their passage into middle childhood. The ages three, five and seven are said to have been chosen as odd numbers are considered auspicious in Japanese numerology.

The custom dates back to the Heian period (794-1185) when child and infant mortality was high. It began amongst court nobles and then spread to the samurai class who added several rituals. During the samurai era, it was customary for children to have their heads shaved at birth. It was kept short until the age of three. The Shichi-go-san festival marked the time when children could start growing their hair, referred to as "kamioki" (literally 'putting on hair').

Although this custom is no longer observed, the celebration of the day that marked it is. At the age of three, boys and girls make their first debut at the local shrine wearing traditional Japanese clothes. Then at the age of five, boys celebrate 'hakamagi-no-ig', their first time to officially wear 'hakama' or formal Japanese pants. And at the age of seven, girls celebrate 'obitoki-no-gi' when they wear the traditional 'obi' sash to tie their kimono for the first time instead of simple cords. Children get Chitoseame in a bag with a crane and a turtle on it. In Japan these animals are symbols of long life. Chitoseame is wrapped in an edible rice paper so children do not have to bother with removing the wrapping.

a) p 166; b) p 87.

More information at ...

1. [Notes of Nomads: Shishi-Go-San Festival, Japan](#)
2. [Go Japan Go: Shishi-Go-San](#)
3. [Kids Web Japan: Shishi-Go-San](#)
4. [Zooming Japan: Shishi-Go-San - 7-5-3 Day on November 15th](#)
5. [Traditions and customs: Shishi-Go-San](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Friday, 15 November 2019

MILAD UL-NABI / BIRTHDAY OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD Muslim (Shi'a)

Observed by Sunni Muslims on 12th Rabi' Al-Awwal (November 10 in 2019), and by the majority of Shi'a Muslims five days later on 17th Rabi' Al-Awwal (November 15 in 2019) (though Nizari Ismaili (Shi'a) Muslims, who are followers of the Aga Khan, celebrate this on the same date as Sunnis, whereas Dawoodi Bohra Ismailis celebrate at the same time as other Shi'a).

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There are only restricted festivities on Milad un-Nabi because the same day also marks the anniversary of the death of the Prophet. In the UK Muslims often celebrate at the mosque, but some refuse to observe the Prophet's birthday, claiming that celebrating birthdays or death anniversaries is a non-Islamic innovation, never celebrated by the Prophet, but introduced more than 600 years after his death. Tradition is not clear as to the date of the Prophet's birth.

a) pp 230-231; b) pp 119-120.

More information at ...

1. [Islamic Supreme Council - Mawlid un Nabi](#)
2. [Celebrating Mawlid un Nabi - any proof?](#)
3. [BBC Milad un Nabi](#)
4. [Mawlid al Nabi - through festival cards](#)
5. [Milad un Nabi - Legal and Religious Status](#)

Sunday, 24 November 2019

MARTYRDOM OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR (1675) Sikh

As ordered by the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded in Sis Ganj, near Chandi Chowk in Old Delhi, for upholding the refusal of a number of Hindu Kashmiri Brahmins' to convert to Islam. These Hindus had turned to him for help and the Guru told them to inform the Emperor that they would only convert if the Guru also converted. This of course he then refused to do. Guru Tegh Bahadur is accordingly honoured for sacrificing his head (*sir*) rather than his faith (*sis*) for the religious freedom of those of a different religious persuasion from himself.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the youngest of the five sons of Guru Hargobind, and was born in 1621 CE. His name means 'Mighty of Sword', and his father foresaw that he would become his successor as Guru in due course. He received effective training in archery and horsemanship as well as in the classic teachings of the Sikh traditions. He showed early promise of mastery in all these fields, and also gave evidence of a deeply mystical temperament by his prolonged spells of seclusion and contemplation. This strain of his genius is best expressed in his sublime poetry, preserved in the Guru Granth. There was no doubt that he was his father's favourite and that mighty events awaited him.

The Guru held several meetings with the Emperor, Aurangzeb. During the course of the discussions and the arguments that ensued in these conferences, Aurangzeb tried to justify his actions to crush infidels, by arguing that the Hindus were destined to be thrown into hell if they did not worship Allah, the one true God. He claimed he was carrying out this policy on the orders of the Almighty and that the only way for Hindus to gain admission to heaven and to avoid hell was to embrace Islam.

Guru Tegh Bahadur in His reply told the Emperor of Delhi: 'All men are created by God and therefore must be free to worship in any manner they like.' It is worth noting that the Sikhs are as much against idol worship as are the Muslims. Ideologically therefore Guru Tegh Bahadur and Aurangzeb were much nearer to each other, than either were to the Hindus - whose cause the Guru was defending. It is apparent that the Guru was espousing an ideology in which he himself did not believe. This is why his sacrifice was unique.

At the end of these discussions the Emperor gave the Guru three options:

- (i) To embrace Islam as His religion and receive the highest honours in his court.
- (ii) To perform miracles, which the Muslims regarded as the fundamental characteristic of a true prophet;
- (iii) To accept death.

The Guru declined to accept Islam or to perform any miracles. 'God's favour is not for the purpose of show, like a juggler.' Instead he willingly accepted the third offer - that of death. He was placed in prison in Delhi, and when he continued to plead the case for Hindu emancipation, he was placed in an iron cage and tortured. He was forced to witness the torture and death of some of his followers, one (Matidas) being sawn in half, while reciting the Japji, another being thrown into a cauldron of boiling water, and yet another torn apart. The Guru still refused to submit and was beheaded on the Emperor's order. His example of courage and bravery had a profound influence on those who supported and followed him, and led eventually to a new era of freedom and tolerance for all.

a) pp 240-242, 244; b) pp 124, 126.

More information at ...

1. [Sikh Missionary Society: The Supreme Sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur](#)
2. [Sikh History: Guru Tegh Bahadur ji \(1621 - 1675\)](#)
3. [8 Quotations from Guru Tegh Bahadur](#)
4. [Guru Tegh Bahadur Shabads](#)
5. [Patshahi 10: Who killed Guru Tegh Bahadur?](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Saturday, 30 November, 2019

ST ANDREW'S DAY *National*

Andrew, the apostle, was brother of St Peter, and the first disciple to follow Jesus. He was crucified at Patras in Greece and has been patron saint of Scotland since the 8th century. In the Anglican communion he is associated with missionary activity.

a) *p 100*; b) *pp 57, 59*.

More information at ...

1. [Time and Date: St Andrew's Day in the UK](#)
2. [Catholic Culture: November 30th - Feast of St. Andrew, apostle](#)
3. [Activity Village - St Andrew's Day](#)
4. [British Library: Medieval manuscripts blog - Happy St Andrew's Day](#)
5. [The Scotsman: St Andrew's Day - History, Date and Traditions](#)

DECEMBER 2019

U Thant

Here is the twelfth of twelve people, one for each month, who have been chosen because a) they exemplify how our deepest beliefs affect the pattern of our lives; and b) because of the variety and the strength of their beliefs. Each person chosen is markedly different in what they believe; but it is the very nature of these beliefs that has shaped their lives and their achievements; and it is in large part the depth of their commitment to what they believe that makes them of interest to us today.

U Thant was born in Pantanaw, Burma, in 1909. The shameful treatment of the Rohingya people by the military government of Myanmar (formerly Burma) is a reminder of its behaviour in the 1970s towards one of its internationally regarded citizens. U Thant was hugely respected for his own family background, for his service to education (he became a headteacher at the age of 25), and for his political integrity as Burma emerged from its status as a British colony. These personal and professional qualities were central to his appointment as Secretary General of the United Nations and in this global position over ten years he played a mediating role in crises over Soviet missiles in Cuba, the Vietnam war and moves to independence in several African states. His work was extensively appreciated, as is evident from the many awards and honours he was given by countries throughout the world. Not so at home. When he died at the age of sixty-five in 1974, the Myanmar government insisted that he be buried without ceremony and popular attempts to challenge this were violently put down. Throughout his life he was determined to show that his Buddhist faith can inform political activity creatively.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/formersg/u-thant>

<https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/150/32779.html>

<https://www.biographyonline.net/politicians/asia/u-thant-biography.html>

http://walterdorn.net/pdf/UThant-BuddhismInAction_Dorn_SG-MoralAuthority_2007.pdf

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/United-Nations/The-Secretary-General-DEVELOPMENTS-UNDER-U-THANT-1961-1971.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2nvwLUSPaU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39DaEKmBKhc>

<https://www.facebook.com/uthanthouse>

http://www.azquotes.com/author/14551-U_Thant

Sunday, 1 December 2019

ADVENT SUNDAY *Christian (Western Churches)*

Advent means 'Coming'. It heralds the start of the Christian year, and commences on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. It is often celebrated by lighting the first candle in the advent crown – a circular wreath of greenery. A further three candles are lit on subsequent Sundays, culminating with the Christmas candle on the 25th of December. Together these signify the transition from darkness to light, the light of Jesus coming into the world.

The earliest celebration of Advent dates back to the year 567 CE when monks were ordered to fast during December, in preparation for Christmas. Some Christians fast during Advent to help them concentrate on their preparations for celebrating the coming of Jesus. In many Orthodox and Eastern Catholics Churches, Advent lasts for 40 days, starting on November 15th. It is also called the Nativity Fast. Orthodox Christians no meat or dairy foods during Advent, and they may also avoid olive oil, wine and fish.

There are some Christmas Carols that are really Advent Carols. These include 'People Look East', 'Come, thou long expected Jesus', 'Lo! He comes, with clouds descending' and, perhaps the most popular advent song, 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel!'.

There are several ways that Advent is counted down but the most common is by a calendar or candles. There are many types of calendars used in different countries. The most common ones in the UK and USA are made of paper or card with 24 or 25 little windows. One of these is opened each day in December and a Christmas picture is displayed underneath.

For Christians Advent is a time of preparation for and reflection on the mystery of the incarnation. It is observed through private prayer and self-discipline and its aim is to ready the believer for celebrating at Christmas the miracle of God's taking human form.

a) pp 82-83; b) pp 48-49, 59, 66, 77, 142.

More information at ...

1. [The Season of Advent - Anticipation and Hope](#)
2. [Living Hope: The meaning of the Advent Wreath](#)
3. [Project Britain - Advent and the Advent Calendar](#)
4. [Eric Huntsman - The Advent theme of joy](#)
5. [Why Christmas: The Tradition of Advent](#)

Sunday, 8 December 2019

BODHI DAY *Buddhist*

Buddhists around the world celebrate Gautama's attainment of Enlightenment in 596 BCE on this day while sitting under a Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, in Northern India. Many consider this to be the most sacred of holy places as it was the birth place of their tradition. Bodhi Day is celebrated in many mainstream Mahayan traditions, including Zen, and in Pure Land Buddhist schools in China, Japan and Korea. Buddhists commemorate the day by meditating, studying the *Dharma* (teaching), chanting *sutras* (Buddhist texts) and performing kind acts toward other beings. Some celebrate by a traditional meal of tea, cakes and readings.

Siddhartha Gautama, who would later become the Buddha, was a prince in Nepal who had lived a comfortable and sheltered life under the care of his family. When he grew up he travelled about, witnessing the misery of old age, sickness, and suffering. These profoundly affected him, and at the age of 29, he chose to leave his comfortable surroundings and seek meaning in life.

After spending six years living the life of an ascetic and serving under six teachers, he was still unsatisfied. He tried many different disciplines, even going so far as to survive by eating only one grain of rice per day, but he soon realized that this was not the way to achieve what he sought. Unable to find answers to his questions, he vowed that he would sit under the Bodhi tree (sometimes called the Pipal tree or Bo tree in certain texts) until his way was clear.

Siddhartha fasted and meditated under this tree for a week, and on the morning of the eighth day came to several realizations which were to become the principles of modern Buddhism. It was here, as Siddhartha meditated and gazed upon Venus rising, that the basis of The Noble Eightfold Path and Four Noble Truths were born.

From this point forward he was referred to as the Buddha - The Enlightened One. He was also known as Shakyamuni (the sage of the Shakya clan) Buddha.

Bodhi Day (or Rohatsu), the day of enlightenment, can be celebrated in many ways. To the Buddhist monk it is a day of remembrance and meditation. To the lay people a good way of recognizing this important event in Buddhism is to dwell on its meaning and to place in the home reminders of this event. Often, coloured lights are strung about the home to recognize the day of enlightenment. They are multi-coloured to symbolize the many pathways to enlightenment. The lights are turned on each evening beginning on December 8th and for 30 days thereafter. A candle is also lit for these thirty days to symbolize enlightenment.

In Buddhist homes, a ficus tree of the genus *ficus religiosa* is often displayed. Beginning on Bodhi Day, these trees are decorated with multi-coloured lights, strung with beads to symbolize the way all things are united, and they are hung with three shiny ornaments to represent the Three Jewels - The *Buddha*, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha*. Sujata offered The Buddha milk and rice which helped him to regain his strength on his pathway to enlightenment. A breakfast of milk and rice would be an appropriate way to start Bodhi day with mindfulness.

a) pp 45-47, 49-50, 54; b) pp 30, 32-35, 33.

More information at ...

1. [How to Celebrate Bodhi Day](#)
2. [Belief.net: Beginners Heart - Happy Bodhi Day](#)
3. [Family Dharma Connection: Happy Bodhi Day](#)
4. [Images for Bodhi Day](#)
5. [Bodhi Day marks the Buddha's Enlightenment](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 8 December 2019 (Transferred to Monday, 9 December)

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *Christian (Roman Catholic) (Transferred to December 9 this year since December 8 is a Sunday)*

Celebrates the doctrine held mainly by Roman Catholics that Mary herself was born free from Original Sin, leaving her sinless for the conception and bearing of Jesus.

a) p 96; b) pp 49, 54-55.

More information at ...

1. [The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption](#)
2. [About Catholicism: What is the Immaculate Conception?](#)
3. [BBC Religions: The Immaculate Conception](#)
4. [Mary's Immaculate Conception](#)
5. [New Advent: Immaculate Conception](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 10 December, 2019

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY *National*

In 1948 The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'All human beings are born with equal and inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms.'

More information at ...

1. [United Nations Human Rights: What are human rights?](#)
2. [OHCHR: United Nations/Human Rights](#)
3. [NRCAT - Torture is a Moral Issue: Sign the Statement](#)
4. [Images for Human Rights Day](#)
5. [Quotes about Human Rights](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Sunday, 22 December, 2019

WINTER SOLSTICE (Alban Arthan or Alban Arthuan) Druid

Sunday, 22 December, 2019

YULE Pagan

Yule is the time of the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, when the sun is reborn, an image of the return of all new life. Heathens celebrate Yule for twelve nights and days, starting the evening before the Winter Solstice (called Mother's night) when they think of their female ancestors and spiritual protectors. The night heralds the beginning of the major holiday in Heathenry.

Yule, (pronounced EWE-elle) is when the dark half of the year relinquishes to the light half. Starting the next morning at sunrise, the sun climbs just a little higher and stays a little longer in the sky each day. Known as Solstice Night, or the longest night of the year, the sun's 'rebirth' is celebrated with much joy. On this night, the rebirth of the Oak King is celebrated, the Sun King, the Giver of Life that warmed the frozen Earth. From this day forward, the days become longer.

The summer and the winter solstices are classic examples of the wheel of the year, marking the end of one phase and the beginning of another. The key aspect of Yule is the spirit of hopefulness that the lengthening days bring, with their reminder of how much there is ahead to celebrate and enjoy.

More information at ...

1. [Wicca: The Winter Solstice - Yule Lore](#)
2. [Pagan/Wiccan: All About Yule](#)
3. [Why Christmas: Customs - The History of the Yule Log](#)
4. [Images for Yule Cards](#)
5. [You Call it Christmas, We Call it Yule](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Monday, 23 December, 2019 – Monday, 30 December, 2019

HANUKAH Jewish

Hanukah is the Jewish Festival of Lights, which celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after it was recaptured from the Syrian Greeks by the Maccabee brothers in about 162 BCE. For the eight evenings of the festival, candles are lit from right to left in a *hanukkiah*, a nine-branched *menorah* – one candle for each evening. The ninth candle is the *shamash* (the servant candle) from which the other candles are lit.

Foods cooked with oil - such as doughnuts and *latkes* (potato cakes) – are traditional to remember the miracle with oil that kept the Temple lights burning so many years ago. A game of *dreidel*, a special, small, spinning top, is popular with children to commemorate 'the great miracle that happened there/here'.

Like many Jewish festivals this is a time for celebrating freedom and independence. The positioning of the lighted candles in the window is an expression of liberty, and the giving of small presents to children each day underlines the role of the family in planning for the future they might not have had.

a) pp 201-205; b) pp 90-91, 104-106, 109, 143-144.

More information at ...

1. [About Judaism: What is Hanukkah?](#)
2. [History of Hanukkah](#)
3. [Torahtots – Fun games: Hanukah](#)
4. [Images for Hanukah](#)
5. [Jewfaq: Chanukkah](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 24 December 2019

CHRISTMAS EVE *Christian*

Evening carol services, crib services and Midnight Masses inaugurate the festival of Christmas. Santa Claus (from the Dutch *Sinter Klaus*) is a legendary figure, based on St Nicholas of Myra, and is supposed to bring presents to children on Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

a) pp 83-84; b) p 50.

More information at ...

1. [Fish Eaters: Christmas Eve and Christmas Day](#)
2. [BBC Religion: The Story of Christmas](#)
3. [Project Britain - Christmas Eve Traditions](#)
4. [Traditional Christmas Songs](#)
5. [Why Christmas: Christmas Eve Traditions and Customs](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Wednesday, 25 December 2019

CHRISTMAS DAY *Christian (see also 6/7 January 2018)*

Christmas Day Celebrates the birth of Jesus, whom Christians believe to be the son of God. The words of St John's Gospel (Chapter 1:1-18) are read in many churches at this time; these speak of 'the Word made flesh', pointing to Christian belief in the Incarnation (God 'made flesh', or human). Gifts are given as reminders of the offerings brought to the infant Jesus at Bethlehem, and Christmas carols, plays and evergreens are associated with this time, while nativity sets are displayed in many churches and in some homes.

Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-7.

a) pp 83-85; b) pp 12-13, 16, 38, 46-51, 58, 81, 136, 141-143, iv.

More information at ...

1. [CBN: The Real Meaning of Christmas](#)
2. [Anno Mundi: The True Meaning of Christmas](#)
3. [Office Holidays: Christmas Day](#)
4. [More Images for Christmas Day](#)
5. [The Huffington Post: The True Meaning of Christmas](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Thursday, 26 December 2019 *Zoroastrian (Iranian)*
Friday, 24 May 2019 *Zoroastrian (Parsi - Shenshai)*
ZARATOSHT NO DISO *Zoroastrian*

Zaratosht no diso is the death anniversary of the Prophet Zarathushtra and is a sorrowful occasion. Tradition records that this is when he was assassinated at the age of 77. It is customary to visit the Fire Temple, participate in special remembrance prayers to him and to the *Fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors), and ponder upon the *Gathas* or Hymns of Zarathushtra, which embody his eternal message to humanity.

No one knows how Zarathushtra died, allegedly at age 77. Many legends, and several Zoroastrian traditions, say that he was killed, while praying in the sanctuary, by a foreign enemy of the king; but many scholars believe that Zarathushtra died peacefully.

Although this day is an occasion of sadness, there is an eternal optimism at the heart of Zoroastrian belief which shines through even the darkest of days such as this.

a) p 255; b) p 131

More information at ...

1. [Zartosht no Diso - a History](#)
2. [I Love India: Festivals/Zartosht-no-diso Celebrations](#)
3. [Crystal Links: Zoroaster and Death](#)
4. [The Parsee Society: Images for Zartosht no diso](#)
5. [Important Zoroastrian Festivals](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 31 December, 2019

OMISOKA *Japanese*

Japanese festival which prepares for the new year by cleansing Shinto home shrines and Buddhist altars. The bells of Buddhist temples are struck 108 times to warn against the 108 evils to be overcome.

a) p 168; b) pp 88, 144.

More information at ...

1. [Kidzworld: Omisoka - Japanese New Year](#)
2. [Two accounts of Omisoka celebrations](#)
3. [Japan – Kidsweb: Omisoka – Ushering in the New Year](#)
4. [Zooming Japan; Omisoka - Japanese New Year's Eve](#)
5. [Bella Online: Japanese Festivals - Omisoka - New Year's Eve](#)

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Tuesday, 31 December 2019

HOGMANAY *National*

A celebration widely observed throughout the UK, and especially in Scotland where bagpipes, *haggis* and first footing are widespread. Clearing one's debts, cleaning the house, welcoming guests and strangers and a host of other traditions feature at this time.

More information at ...

1. [BBC News: Hogmanay celebrations: Scotland brings in the new year](#)
2. [Rampant Scotland - Hogmanay](#)
3. [Hogmanay-top-facts](#)
4. [British Food and Drink: Hogmanay](#)
5. [History of New-Years](#)

Index by Date of Festivals
 July 2018 – December 2019
New year celebrations are printed in bold type

NEW YEAR'S DAYS:		
Al-Hijra / Islamic New Year (Muslim)	12/09/2018	01/09/2019
Baisakhi (Vaisakhi) (Sikh)	14/04/2018	14/04/2019
Chinese New Year (Chinese)	16/02/2018	05/02/2019
Divali (Deepavali) (Hindu/Jain)	07-11/11/2018	05/02/2019
Ethiopian New Year's Day (Rastafarian)	11/09/2018	11/09/2019
Ganjitsu (Japanese)	01/01/2018	01/01/2019
Jamshedi Noruz (Zoroastrian - Iranian)	21/03/2018	21/03/2019
Naw-Ruz (Baha'i)	21/03/2018	21/03/2019
New Year's Day / (Hogmanay) (National)	01/01/2018	01/01/2019
Navroze / NoRuz (Zoroastrian – Shenshai/Parsi)	17/08/2018	17/08/2019
Rosh Hashanah (Jewish)	10-11/09/2018	30/09-1/10/2019
Yuan Tan (Chinese)	16/02/2018	05/02/2019
Adar Mah Parab (Zoroastrian – Shenshai – Parsee)	22/04/2018	22/04/2019
Advent Sunday (Christian)	02/12/2018	01/11/2019
Al-Hijra / Islamic New Year (Muslim)	12/09/2018	01/09/2019
All Saints' Day (Christian)	01/11/2018	01/11/2019
All Souls' Day (Christian)	02/11/2018	02/11/2019
Anapanasati Day (Buddhist)	23/11/2018	12/11/2019
Annunciation to the Virgin Mary	09/04/2018	25/03/2019
Asalha Puja/Dharma Day (Buddhist)	27/07/2018	03-12/08/2019
Ascension Day (Christian-Western)	10/05/2018	30/05/2019
Ascension Day (Christian-RC)	13/05/2018	02/06/2019
Ascension Day (Christian - Orthodox)	10/05/2018	06/02/2019
Ash Wednesday (Christian)	14/02/2018	06/03/2019
Ashura (Muslim)	21/09/2018	10/09/2019
Autumn Equinox (Mabon) (Wiccan/Pagan) (Druid)	23/09/2018	23/09/2019
Ava Mah Parab (Aban Jashan) (Zoroastrian)	24/03/2018	24/03/2019
Bab, Anniversary of the Birth of the (Baha'i)	09/11/2018	29/10/2019
Bab, Anniversary of the Declaration of (Baha'i)	23/05/2018	24/05/2019
Bab, Anniversary of the Martyrdom of (Baha'i)	09/07/2018	10/07/2019
Baha'u'llah, Anniversary of the Ascension of (Baha'i)	29/05/2018	29/05/2019
Baha'u'llah, Anniversary of the Birth of (Baha'i)	10/11/2018	30/10/2019
Baisakhi (Vaisakhi) (Sikh)	14/04/2018	14/04/2019
Bandi Chhor Divas (Divali) (Sikh)	07/11/2018	27-31/10/2019
Baptism of Christ/The Lord	07/08/01/2019	13/01/2019
Basant/Vasant (Namdhari Sikh)	22/01/2018	09/10/02/2019
Beltaine (Pagan/Druid)	01/05/2018	01/05/2019
Blessed Virgin Mary, Annunciation to the (Christian)	09/04/2018	25/03/2019
Blessed Virgin Mary, Annunciation to the (Christian RC)	09/04/2018	25/03/2019
Blessed Virgin Mary, Annunciation to the (Orthodox)	07/04/2018	25/03/2019
Blessed Virgin Mary, Assumption of the (Christian)	15/08/2018	15/08/2019
Blessed Virgin Mary, Immaculate Conception of the (Christian)	08/12/2018	08/09/12/2019
Bodhi Day (Buddhist)	08/12/2018	08/12/2019
Buddha Day – Wesak (Buddhist)	29/05/2018	19/05/2019
Candlemas (Pagan) (Christian)	01/02/2018	01/02/2019
Ch'i Hou Chieh – Double Seven Festival (Chinese)	17/08/2018	07/08/2019
Ch'ing Ming, Festival of Pure Brightness (Chinese)	05/04/2018	05/04/2019
Chinese New Year/Spring Festival (Chinese)	16/02/2018	05/02/2019
Chokor (Buddhist)	15/16/07/2018	06/07/2019
Chongyangjie – Picnic in a High Place (Chinese)	17/10/2018	21/10/2019
Christian Aid Week (Christian)	13-19/05/2018	12-18/05/2019
Christmas Eve (Christian)	24/12/2018	24/12/2019
Christmas Day (Christian and National)	25/12/2018	25/12/2019
Christmas Eve/Day (Christian – Eastern Orthodox, Rastafarian)	06/07/01/2018	06/07/01/2019
Chung Ch'iu / Rabbit in the Moon Festival (Chinese)	24/09/2018	13/09/2019
Chung Yuan / Festival of Hungry Ghosts (Chinese)	25/08/2018	15/08/2019
Ch'ung Yang / Picnic in a High Place Festival (Chinese)	17/10/2018	07/10/2019
Chunjie – New Year Festival (Chinese)	16/02/2018	05/02/2019
Circumcision of Jesus (Christian)	01/01/2018	01/01/2019

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Climb a High Mountain (Chinese)	17/10/2018	07/10/2019
Conferring of Guruship on Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh)	20/10/2018	20/10/2019
Corpus Christi (Christian - Anglican)	03/06/2018	20/06/2019
Corpus Christi (Christian - Roman Catholic)	31/05/2018	20/06/2019
Dharma Day/Asalha Puja (Buddhist)	27/07/2018	16/17/07/2019
Dhul-Hijjah - First ten Days	13-22/08/2018	03-12/08/2019
Divali (Deepavali) (Hindu/Jain)	07-11/11/2018	27-31/10/2019
Divali (Bandi Chhor Divas) (Sikh)	07/11/2018	27/10/2019
Dormition (Christian)	15/08/2018	15/08/2019
Dragon Boat Festival (Chinese)	18/06/2018	07/06/2019
Duanwujie - Dragon Boat Festival (Chinese)	18/06/2018	07/06/2019
Durga Puja (Hindu)	14-18/10/2018	03-08/10/2019
Dussehra/Dassehra (Hindu)	19/10/2018	07/08/10/2019
Easter Day (Christian - Western Churches)	01/04/2018	21/04/2019
Easter Day/Pascha (Christian - Eastern Orthodox)/(Rastafarian)	08/04/2018	28/04/2019
Eid-ul-Adha, The Festival of Sacrifice (Muslim)	22-25/08/2018	12-16/08/2019
Eid-ul-Fitr, Festival of Fast Breaking (Muslim)	15/06/2018	05/06/2019
Eid ul Ghadeer (Muslim)	30/08/2018	20/08/2019
Epiphany (Christian)	06/01/2018	06/01/2019
Ethiopian New Year's Day (Rastafarian)	11/09/2018	11/09/2019
Fravardigan / Muktad (Zoroastrian - Iranian)	11-20/03/2018	11-20/03/2019
Fravardigan / Muktad (Zoroastrian - Shenshai)	07-16/08/2018	07-16/08/2019
Fravardin Mah Parab (Zoroastrian - Shenshai - Parsi)	04/09/2018	04/09/2019
Ganesh Chaturthi (Hindu)	13/09/2018	02/09/2019
Gandhi Jayanti (Hindu)	02/10/2018	02/10/2019
Ganjitsu (Japanese)	01/01/2018	01/01/2019
Good Friday (Christian)	30/03/2018	21/04/2019
Guru Arjan, Martyrdom of (Sikh)	16/06/2018	16/06/2019
Guru Gobind Singh, Birthday of (Sikh)	05/01/2018	13/01/2019
Guru Nanak, Birthday of (Sikh)	23/11/2018	12/11/2019
Guru Tegh Bahadur, Martyrdom of (Sikh)	24/11/2018	24/11/2019
Haile Selassie I, Birthday of (Rastafarian)	23/07/2018	23/07/2019
Haile Selassie I, Crowning of (Rastafarian)	02/11/2018	02/11/2019
Hajj (Muslim)	20-24/08/2018	10-14/08/2019
Halloween (Wiccan/Pagan)	31/10/2018	31/10/2019
Hanamatsuri (Buddhist/Japanese)	08/04/2018	08/04/2019
Hanukah (Jewish)	03/12-10/12/2018	23-30/12/2019
Hanuman Jayanti (Hindu)	31/03/2018	19/04/2019
Harvest Festival (Christian)	*09 or 10/2018	07/08/2019
Herd Boy and Weaving Maid (Chinese)	17/08/2018	20-26/09/2019
Higan (Shubun-No Hi) (Autumn) (Japanese)	20/09-26/09/2018	20-26/09/2019
Higan, (Shunbun-No Hi) (Spring) (Japanese)	18-24/03/2018	18-24/03/2019
Hinamatsuri (Japanese)	03/03/2018	31/12/2019
Hogmanay (National)	31/12/2018	31/12/2019
Hola Mahalla/Mohalla (Sikh)	03/03/2018	21/03/2019
Holi (Hindu)	02/03/2018	27/01/2019
Holocaust Memorial Day (National)	27/01/2018	20/04/2019
Holy Saturday (Christian)	31/03/2018	14-20/04/2019
Holy Week (Christian)	25-31/03/2018	25/01/2019
Honen Memorial Day (Buddhist)	25/01/2018	25/01/2019
Human Rights Day (National)	10/12/2018	15/08/2019
Hungry Ghosts Festival (Chinese)	25/08/2018	01/02/2019
Imbolc/Candlemas (Pagan)	01/02/2018	03/03/2019
Installation of Sikh Scripture in Harmandir Sahib (Sikh)	01/09/2018	01/09/2019
Interfaith Week	11-18/11/2018	10-17/11/2019
Inter Faith Week of Prayer for World Peace	16-23/10/2018	13-20/10/2019
Jamshedi NoRuz (Zoroastrian)	21/03/2018	21/03/2019
Janmashtami / Krishna Jayanti (Hindu)	02/09/2018	23/24/08/2019
Jashn-e Mehrgan (or Mihr Jashan) (Zoroastrian - Iranian)	01/10/2018	01/10/2019
Jashn-e Sadeh (Zoroastrian - Iranian)	30/01/2018	30/01/2019
Jashn-e Tirgan (Tir Jashan) (Zoroastrian - Iranian)	01/07/2018	01/07/2019
Khordad Sal (Zoroastrian - Iranian)	26/03/2018	26/03/2019
Khordad Sal (Zoroastrian - Shenshai)	22/08/2018	22/08/2019
Krishna Jayanti / Janmashtami / (Hindu)	02/09/2018	01/02/2019
Lady Day (National)	25/03/2018	25/03/2019
Lag B'Omer (Jewish)	25/03/2018	20-21/04/2019
Lailat-ul-Bara'h, The Night of Forgiveness (Muslim)	30/04-01/05/2018	03/04/2019
Lailat-ul-Isra' - The Prophet's Night Journey (Muslim)	13/04/2018	28/05/2019
Lailat-ul-Qadr (Muslim - Shi'a)	07/06/2018	31/05/2019
Lailat-ul-Qadr (Muslim - Sunni)	11/06/2018	

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Lammas (Lughnasadh) (Wiccan/Pagan)	01/08/2018	01/08/2019
Lantern Festival (Chinese)	02/03/2018	19/02/2019
Lent (Christian)	14/02-31/03/2018	06/03-20/04/2019
Lent, first Day of (Great Lent) (Christian – Eastern Orthodox)	19/02/2018	11/03/2019
Lohri / Makar Sankranti (Hindu)	13/01/2018	14/15/01/2019
Loy Kratong (Buddhist)	23/11/2018	12/11/2019
Losar (Buddhist)	16/17/02/2018	05-07/02/2019
Lughnasadh (Lammas) (Pagan)	01/08/2018	01/08/2019
Mabon (Autumn Equinox) (Pagan)	22/09/2018	21/09/2019
Magha Puja (Buddhist)	*01/03/2018	19/02/2019
Mahashivaratri (Hindu)	13/02/2018	04/03/2019
Mahavira Jayanti (Jain)	29/03/2018	17/04/2019
Makar Sankrant/Lohri (Hindu)	13/01/2018	14/15/01/2019
Maundy Thursday (Christian)	29/03/2018	18/04/2019
May Eve (Pagan)	30/04/2018	30/04/2019
Methodist Annual Covenant Service	07/14/01/2019	06/13/01/2019
Michaelmas Day (National)	29/09/2018	29/09/2019
Midsummer Solstice (Pagan/Druid)	21/06/2018	21/06/2019
Midsummer Day (National)	24/06/2018	24/06/2019
Mothering Sunday (Christian)	11/03/2018	31/03/2019
Muhammad, Birthday of (Muslim - Sunni) Milad-ul Nabi	21/11/2018	10/11/2019
Muhammad, Birthday of (Muslim – Shi'a) Milad-ul-Nabi	26/11/2018	15/11/2019
Navaratri (Hindu)	09-17/10/2018	29/09-07/10/2019
Navroze (Zoroastrian – Shenshai; Parsi)	17/08/2018	17/08/2019
Naw-Ruz (Baha'i)	21/03/2018	21/03/2019
New Year's Day / (Hogmanay) (National)	01/01/2018	01/01/2019
Nichiren – The Chanting of the Daimokhu (Buddhist)		
Night of Forgiveness - Lailat-ul-Bara'h (Muslim)	30/04/2018	21/04/2019
Nirvana Day (Buddhist)	08/15/02/2018	08/15/02/2019
NoRuz (Zoroastrian)	21/03/2018	21/03/2019
O-bon (Japanese) (not Tokyo)	13-15/07/2018	13-15/07/2019
O-bon (Japanese) (in Tokyo)	13-15/08/2018	13-15/08/2019
Omisoka (Japanese)	31/12/2018	31/12/2019
Palm Sunday (Christian)	25/03/2018	14/04/2019
Parinirvana (Buddhist)	08 or 15/02/2018	08/15/02/2019
Paryushan Parva (Jain)	06-13/09/2018	27/08-03/09/2019
Pascha/Easter Day (Christian - Eastern Orthodox)	08/03/2018	28/04/2019
Passion Sunday (Christian)	18/03/2018	07/04/2019
Passover/Pesach (Jewish)	31/03-07/04/2018	20-27/04/2019
Pavarana (Buddhist)	24/10/2018	14/10/2019
Pentecost (Whitsuntide) (Christian - Western)	20/05/2018	09/06/2019
Pentecost (Christian – Eastern Orthodox)	27/05/2018	16/06/2019
Pesach/Passover (Jewish)	31/03-07/04/2018	20-27/04/2019
Picnic in a High Place Festival (Chinese)	17/10/2018	07/10/2019
Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas) (Christian)	02/02/2018	02/02/2019
Prophet's Night Journey - Lailat-ul-Isra' (Muslim)	13/04/2018	03/04/2019
Pure Brightness Festival (Ch'ing Ming) (Chinese)	05/04/2018	05/04/2019
Purim (Jewish)	01/03/2018	21/03/2019
Qingmingjie (Chinese)	05/04/2018	05/04/2019
Qixijie (Chinese)	17/10/2018	07/10/2019
Rabbit in the Moon Festival (Chinese)	24/09/2018	13/09/2019
Raksha Bandhan (Hindu)	26/08/2018	14/15/08/2019
Ramadan (Muslim)	16/05-14/06/2018	06/05-04/06/2019
Rama Navami (Hindu)	25/03/2018	14/04/2019
Ratha Yatra (Hindu)	14/07/2018	04/07/2019
Remembrance Day (National)	11/11/2018	10/11/2019
Ridvan (Baha'i)	21/04-02/05/2018	21/04-02/05/2019
Rosh Hashanah (Jewish)	10/09-11/09/2018	30/09-01/10/2019
St Andrew's Day (National)	30/11/2018	30/11/2019
St David's Day (National)	01/03/2018	01/03/2019
St George's Day (National)	23/04/2018	23/04/2019
St Joseph's Day (Christian)	20/03/2018	19/03/2019
St Patrick's Day (National)	17/03/2018	17/03/2019
Samhain / Samhuinn (Wiccan/Pagan / Druid)	31/10/2018	31/10/2019
Samvatsari (Jain)	13/09/2018	03/09/2019
Sarasvati Puja (Hindu)	22/01/2018	09/10/02/2019
Setsubun/Bean Scattering (Japanese)	03/02/2018	03/02/2019
Shavuot (Pentecost) (Jewish)	20/05-21/05/2018	09-10/06/2019
Shishi-Go-San (Japanese)	15/11/2018	15/11/2019
Shinran Memorial Day (Buddhist)	16/01/2018	16/01/2019
Shrove Tuesday (Christian)	13/02/2018	05/03/2019

Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals 2018 - 2019

Shubun No Hi, (Autumn) (Japanese)	23/09/2018	23/09/2019
Shunbun No Hi, (Spring) (Japanese)	20/03/2018	20/03/2019
Simchat Torah (Jewish)	02/10/2018	22/10/2019
Songkran (Buddhist)	13/04/2018	13/04/2019
Spring Equinox (Ostara) (Pagan)	20/03/2018	20/03/2019
Sukkot (Jewish)	24/09-01/10/2018	14-20/10/2019
Summer Solstice (Pagan)	21/06/2018	21/06/2019
Teng Chieh - Lantern Festival (Chinese)	02/03/2018	19/02/2019
Thanksgiving for Institution of Holy Communion (Anglican)	03/06/2018	06/08/2019
Theophany (Christian - Eastern Orthodox)	19/01/2018	16/06/2019
Tisha B'Av (Jewish)	22/07/2018	11/08/2019
Tomb Sweeping Day (Chinese)	05/04/2018	21/01/2019
Transfiguration (Christian)	06/08/2018	14/04/2019
Trinity Sunday (Christian)	27/05/2018	09/10/02/2019
Tuan Yang Chieh – Dragon Boat (Chinese)	18/06/2018	07/06/2019
Tu B'Shevat (Jewish)	31/01/2018	20/03/2019
Vaisakhi (Baisakhi) (Sikh)	14/04/2018	14/04/2019
Vasant Panchami (Hindu)	22/01/2018	12/01/2019
Vasant/Basant (Namdhari Sikh)	22/01/2018	12/01/2019
Vernal Equinox (Druid)	20/03/2018	20/03/2019
Vesakha Puja (Wesak) (Buddhist)	29/05/2018	19/05/2019
Vijaya Dashami (Hindu)	19/10/2018	08/10/2019
Swami Vivekananda (Birthday) (Hindu)	20/01/2018	31/10/2019
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Christian)	18-25/01/2018	22/12/2019
Wesak (Buddhist)	29/05/2018	01/03/2019
Whitsuntide (Christian)	20/05/2018	21/06/2019
Winter Nights (Heathen)	31/10/2018	20/01/2019
Winter Solstice (Druid)	21/12/2018	10/08/2019
Women's World Day of Prayer (Christian)	02/03/2018	01/03/2019
World Humanist Day (National)	21/06/2018	21/06/2019
World Religion Day (National)	21/01/2018	20/01/2019
Yaum-Arafah (Muslim)	21/08/2018	10/08/2019
Yom Ha'Atzma'ut (Jewish)	19/04/2018	09/05/2019
Yom Ha-Shoah (Jewish)	12/04/2018	02/05/2019
Yom Kippur (Jewish)	19/09/2018	09/10/2019
Yuan Tan (Chinese)	16/02/2018	05/02/2019
Yuanxiaojie (Chinese)	02/03/2018	19/02/2019
Yule (Wiccan/Pagan)	21/12/2018	22/12/2019
Zaratosht-no-diso (Zoroastrian – Shenshai-Parsi)	24/05/2018	24/05/2019
Zaratosht-no-diso (Zoroastrian - Iranian)	26/12/2018	26/12/2019
Zhohgyuanjie (Chinese)	25/08/2018	15/08/2019
Zhongqiuje (Chinese)	24/09/2018	13/09/2019

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We continue to be interested in hearing from former members of the Working Party, and from participants in its many conferences, contributors to its publications, and any others who may have material they would like to donate to the archive. In the first instance we should be pleased to receive a list of any such items.

**Information should be sent to Mary Hayward,
email: maryhayward@btinternet.com**

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1982/1983	Death
1981/1982	Rites of Passage
1980/1981	No specific title
1979/1980	No specific title
1978/1979	No specific title (Jewish Studies Rastafari and Marxism)