

Days of Significance

Resource Guide

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*Heritage/Awareness/History Months*

*Resource Guide*

*Alphabetically Sequenced by*

*Faith Observance/Institutional Event*

Further Reading and

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To the Reader:

Information contained in this document has been obtained from several dozen sources. Please see Day(s) of Significance (Faith Holy Days and Institutional Events) in the ***Resource Guide*** for further reading.

Every effort has been made in the production of this document to provide the most accurate information possible. If, however, the reader identifies any inaccuracies, inconsistencies, information to be updated, etc., please contact Peter Langford at the email address provided below.

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For further information, please contact the following TDSB Offices:

**Human Rights Office**

416-397-3622

<http://tdsbweb/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=243&menuid=2151&pageid=1670>

**Gender Based Violence Prevention**

416-393-9667

[www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp)

**Urban Indigenous Education Centre**

416-396-9600

<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/Indigenous-Education>

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***January***

**Tamil Heritage Month**

A unanimous decision was made in the House of Commons declaring the month of January as Tamil Heritage Month. The motion “recognizes the contributions that Tamil-Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of the Tamil language and culture, and the importance of educating and reflecting upon Tamil heritage for future generations by declaring January, every year, Tamil Heritage Month.”

Tamils began migrating to Canada as early as the 1950's, which accelerated after the anti-Tamil pogrom in July 1983. Since that time, Tamil Canadians have overcome tremendous obstacles after their arrival and have made significant contributions to the growth and prosperity of Canada.

January is an important month for Tamil Canadians, as the Tamil Harvest Festival, Thai Pongal, is celebrated in this month.

Further Reading: <http://tamilculture.com/january-officially-declared-tamil-heritage-month-canada/>

***February***

**African Heritage Month**

Every February, the TDSB celebrates African Heritage Month, a time to learn about and pay tribute to the many ways in which Black Canadians and people of the African Diaspora have helped shape our society, and to recognize the invaluable contributions they have made to our province, country and world.

TDSB schools will engage in local initiatives, and participate in a variety of community events that reflect this history and the countless triumphs and struggles they have experienced over hundreds of years.

And, while we feature African Heritage Month in February, it’s important that learning does not stop there. The best outcomes are realized when all students of all backgrounds are engaged in positive learning about African heritage.

Further Reading:

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/news/articledetails/tabid/116/artmid/474/articleid/677/african-heritage-month-at-the-tdsb.aspx>

**Chinese Heritage Month**

*See Asian Heritage Month (May)*

***March***

**Greek Heritage Month**

March is Greek Heritage Month. It is an occasion to recognize and celebrate the many achievements and contributions of Greek Canadians to Canada, an occasion to mark and enjoy the history of Greek culture. Democracy? Philosophy? Politics? Drama? Mathematics? Medicine? Literature? Gods and Goddesses? Greek civilization has given the world generations of accomplishments and inspiration.

Further Reading:<http://allenbyparents.com/blog2/tdsb-greek-heritage-month-multi-media-contest/>

***April***

**Genocide Awareness Month**

On March 25, 2015, Motion M-587 was introduced in the Canadian Parliament by Mississauga-Streetsville MP Brad Butt (Conservative). The motion reads:

*That the House: (a) re-affirm its support for (i) the Holocaust Memorial Day Act, (ii) the Armenian genocide recognition resolution adopted on April 21, 2004, (iii) the Rwandan genocide resolution adopted on April 7, 2008, (iv) the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (“Holodomor”) Memorial Day Act; (b) call upon the government to honour the victims of all genocides by recognizing the month of April as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month; and (c) acknowledge the associated commemorative days of (i) Yom ha-Shoah (Holocaust Memorial Day), as determined by the Jewish Lunar calendar, (ii) Armenian Genocide Memorial Day on April 24, (iii) Rwandan Genocide Memorial Day on April 7, (iv) Holodomor Memorial Day on the fourth Saturday in November.*

April 24, 2015 will mark the hundredth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. In those hundred years, similar horrific events have been repeated over and over again.

Preventing genocide is the personal responsibility of every individual around the world. Only you can give life to the words “Never Again!” As a world leader in human rights advocacy, Canada is uniquely placed to take this step towards ensuring a more humane world for future generations.

Further Reading: <http://genocidecentennial.ca/m587/>

**Latin American History Month (see also October Hispanic Heritage Month)**

[Latin American immigrants](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/latin-americans/) began arriving in large numbers in Toronto in the late 1970's. Latin America is generally defined as the countries south of the United States where people speak

Romance languages (such as Spanish, Portuguese, and French). Today, some of the people from these countries might identify as Latino, Latina, Latinx, or Hispanic.

Before 1970, there were only around 3,000 people who identified as Latin American in Canada. In the early part of that decade, around 68,000 Latin Americans started arriving, some on tourist visas. Canada then, had a policy that allowed people to arrive as visitors and then apply for landed immigrant status.

At this point, most Latin American immigrants were from the Andean region, where economic prospects were shrinking. In the 1970’s, political unrest in Central and South America led people to flee their homes and countries, with thousands choosing to move to Canada.

Further Reading: <http://torontoist.com/2016/11/how-latin-american-heritage-is-celebrated-in-toronto/>

**Sikh Heritage Month**

Sikhism is a major world religion that traces its origins back to the 15th century in what is known today as Punjab. Sikhism was started as a social revolution by its first teacher, Guru Nanak, who laid the foundation for a distinct and unique monotheistic faith based on the principles of equality and social justice. Sikh Heritage Month aims to celebrate the contributions and aspirations of all Sikh-Canadians and develop a greater understanding and appreciation for a rich, unique and diverse heritage.

Further Reading: <http://ontariosikhheritagemonth.ca/>

***May***

**Asian Heritage Month**

May is Asian Heritage Month, a time to acknowledge the long and rich history of Asian Canadians and their contributions to Canada. It also provides an opportunity for Canadians across the country to reflect on and celebrate the contributions of Canadians of Asian heritage to the growth and prosperity of Canada. Canadians are invited to take part in the events that honour [the legacy of Canadians of Asian heritage](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/asian/highlights.asp) who, throughout history, have done so much to make Canada the culturally diverse, compassionate and prosperous nation we know today.

Further Reading: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/asian/>

**Jewish Heritage Month**

Ontario is home to approximately 200,000 Jewish Canadians. Since the 1800's, the Jewish Canadian community has made significant contributions to the growth and prosperity of Ontario, while overcoming tremendous obstacles.

May is a significant month for the Jewish Canadian community. Israeli Independence Day (Yom ha-Atzmaut) and Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom ha-Shoah) frequently occur in May, as do various Jewish artistic and cultural events.

By proclaiming the month of May as Jewish Heritage Month, the Province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Jewish Canadians have made to Ontario’s social, economic, political and cultural fabric. Jewish Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the inspirational role that Jewish Canadians have played, and continue to play, in communities across Ontario.

Further Reading: <http://www.cija.ca/ontario-jewish-heritage-month/>

**Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month**

In March 2011, the Ontario Women’s Directorate started a campaign to end sexual violence, called Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives: Ontario’s Sexual Violence Action Plan. Part of the plan included the recent “Draw the line Campaign,” which encourages bystanders and the greater community at large to take responsibility in ending sexual violence. It encourages people not to just “go along with it”, but to intervene and prevent it from happening.

This prevention strategy focuses not only on preventing sexual assault, but also on stopping sexist jokes and challenging rape culture, which refers to societal attitudes about gender that are normalized (such as victim blaming, denial and sexual objectification).

This strategy marks a shift away from victim blaming prevention strategies. Most women can recall being told at some point in their life how they can protect themselves from rape. These strategies included: watching your drink, don’t wear certain clothes; don’t walk home alone at night and many more. These strategies blamed women for when sexual assault happens and made invisible the people who perpetuate sexual assault, predominantly men. Women were told not to get raped, but no one was telling men not to rape. The recent sexual assault prevention strategies seem to be a shift in the right direction.

Further Reading: <http://www.nellies.org/2015/04/26/sexual-assault-awareness-prevention-month/>

***June***

**Italian Heritage Month**

In 2010, the Province of Ontario declared June Italian Heritage Month. Why? Well, Ontario is home to more than 1,350,000 Italian Canadians. Since the 1880's, the Italian Canadian community has made and continues to make significant contributions to the growth and prosperity of the province. Since that declaration, a festa (party) has ensued for all of June across Ontario, but also across the country.

You can visit [italianheritagecanada.ca](http://www.italianheritagecanada.ca/) for a listing of events, though there may be even more going on. There are multiple heritage day celebrations and Italian flag raising in cities across Ontario and even out in Vancouver. My favourite month-long event is the “Books and Biscotti” literary reading series. After the jump, I’ve made a list of my top celebrations to head out to in June. If you’re not in Ontario, or not in Canada, celebrate with us here at An Italian-Canadian Life. Try a recipe, share a photo, comment on a blog posting and discuss the many things there is to love about Italians and being Italian.

Further Reading: <http://www.anitaliancanadianlife.ca/culture/june-is-italian-heritage-month/>

**National Indigenous Heritage Month**

In June, Canadians celebrate National Indigenous History Month to honour the history, heritage and diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada. It is also an opportunity to recognize the strength of present-day Indigenous communities.

This year's celebrations (2019) are particularly special as National Indigenous History Month marks its 10 anniversary. It follows the passing of a unanimous motion in the House of Commons in 2009, creating what was then known as National Aboriginal History Month.

The Government of Canada is proud to acknowledge that UNESCO declared 2019 as [International Year of Indigenous Languages](https://en.iyil2019.org/) to raise awareness of the crucial role languages play in people's daily lives. According to results from the 2016 Census, from 1996 to 2016 the total number of people in Canada who were able to speak an Indigenous language went up by 8%.

We will continue to raise awareness and take action to improve the preservation and promotion of Indigenous languages to revitalize traditional knowledge, songs and cultural identity.

Further Reading: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1466616436543/1534874922512?fbclid=IwAR2jXX2pV9uV5X-dNPDfO1wCbK6fesZw_UP9Gt_qcoa1yK5LLPWTAz8cwAo>

**Portuguese Speaking Heritage Month**

June is Portuguese Speaking Heritage Month. With some 250 million speakers worldwide, Portuguese is the world’s fifth-most spoken language and the mother tongue of nearly 60,000 Torontonians. For the many Portuguese-speaking students in our schools, Portuguese Speaking Heritage Month is an opportunity to share their vibrant culture and traditions with their friends, classmates and teachers. During the month of June, TDSB staff and students will participate in a number of events and celebrations in honour of Portuguese Speaking Heritage Month, including a flag raising ceremony to celebrate Portugal National Day at Nathan Phillips Square on June 10 and the 28th Annual Portugal Day Parade on June 14.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portuguese_Canadians>

**PRIDE Month (City of Toronto)**

Pride Toronto is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to bring people together to celebrate the history, courage and diversity of our community.

Uniting and empowering people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, the annual Pride Toronto festival has become a major Canadian arts and cultural event and the largest Pride celebration in North America. Pride showcases Toronto on the world stage with diversity, inclusion and vibrant creativity.

June 2016 featured Toronto’s first-ever Pride Month, culminating with the annual Pride Parade on the first Sunday of July.

Further Reading: <http://www.pridetoronto.com/about-us/>

***October***

**Hispanic Heritage Month**

Ontario is home to more than 400,000 first, second and third generation Canadians of Hispanic origin. As early as 1914, Canadians who originated from the 23 Hispanic countries began immigrating to the province and today the Hispanic community is one of the fastest growing in Ontario. Hispanic-Canadians represent a dynamic community that has made significant contributions to the growth and prosperity of the Province of Ontario.

October is a significant month for the Hispanic community. Each year, during the month of October, peoples of Hispanic origin around the world come together and pay tribute to their shared culture. Celebrations are held around the world, such as Hispanic Day (Dia de la Hispanidad), the Day of the Cultures (Dia de las Culturas), Day of the Race (Dia de la Raza), Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity (Dia del Respeto a la Diversidad Cultural), Day of Indigenous Resistance (Dia de la Resistencia

Indigena), and the commemoration of Hispanic Heritage Month in North America. In 2014, the City of Toronto joined in this commemoration and officially named October as Hispanic Heritage Month.

By proclaiming the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario, the province recognizes the rich contributions of Hispanic-Canadians to our social, economic, political and multicultural fabric. Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements and contributions of Hispanic people in the province.

Further Reading: <http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=3054>

**Islamic Heritage Month (City of Toronto)**

Muslims have been contributing to all aspect of Ontario’s prosperity and diverse heritage for generations. Islamic history and culture encompasses a broad range of individual and collective experiences, as well as important contributions to literature, math, science, art and history. In 2007 the Government of Canada declared the month of October in each year as Canadian Islamic History Month.

The Province of Ontario recognizes and wishes to affirm the important contributions that Muslims make in Ontario as part of the vibrant social, economic, political and cultural fabric of our province.

Proclaiming a month to be Islamic Heritage Month in Ontario will provide all Ontarians, both today and in future generations, with an opportunity to reflect, celebrate and learn about the rich and longstanding Islamic history in the Province and the diverse roles and contributions of Muslim people in communities across Ontario. This new understanding will in turn help combat anti-Islamic sentiment.

Further Reading: <http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=4155>

**Somali Heritage Month**

At the Regular Board meeting held on 22 June 2016, the TDSB Board of Trustees resolved that the month of October, in each year be declared as Somali Heritage Month. The TDSB affirms our commitment to celebrating Somali Heritage Month, and encourages students and staff to take this opportunity to learn about the history, heritage and diversity of the Somali heritage. As well as celebrating, facilitating and encouraging education excellence with Canadian students of Somali descent, Canadians of Somali descent have made and continue to make significant contributions to the City of Toronto, province of Ontario and Canadian society at large. The month of October will provide an opportunity for Somali-heritage communities to share their vibrant culture and traditions with the TDSB communities and the City of Toronto.

Further Reading: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Media/News/TabId/372/ArtMID/2750/ArticleID/993/October-is-Somali-Heritage-Month.aspx>

**Women’s History Month**

Women's History Month was proclaimed in Canada in 1992, where its purpose is to give Canadians "an opportunity to learn about the important contributions of women and girls to our society – and to the quality of our lives today". October was chosen to coincide with the celebration of the anniversary on October 18 of the decision of the court case [Edwards v. Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwards_v._Canada_(Attorney_General)), more commonly

known as the Persons Case, in which it was established that Canadian women were eligible to be appointed [senators](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senate_of_Canada) and in general had the same rights as Canadian men with respect to positions of political power.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women's_History_Month#In_Canada>

***November***

**Albanian Heritage Month**

Ontario is home to more than 28 000 Albanian Canadians. During the month of November, people of Albanian origin celebrate the Albanian Declaration of Independence which declared them an independent and sovereign nation. Albania also commemorates Liberation Day in this month which is the day that it was liberated from Nazi Germany forces after the Albanian Resistance. On this day, the Province recognizes the meaningful contributions that Albanians have made to Ontario. It is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about Ontario’s rich history.

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# ACTION CANADA FOR SEXUAL HEALTH & RIGHTS

## Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness Week

(Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights)

Founded in 2014, three of Canada’s leading sexual and reproductive health and rights organizations saw an opportunity for a strengthened voice in international and national policy, education and access as well as a way to engage others across Canada and around the world in the sexual and reproductive health and rights movement.

The amalgamation provided an opportunity for each of the three organizations to build on one another’s strengths and shared vision. While Canadians for Choice (CFC) and the Canadian Federation for Sexual Health (CFSH) would benefit from policy expertise and international partnerships, Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD) would profit from first-hand knowledge of the Canadian sexual and reproductive health and rights landscape and a newly bridged gap between the national and global context.

Building upon the strengths of each organization, working nationally and internationally, Action Canada is well positioned to:

* increase access to quality sexual and reproductive health information and services and to comprehensive sexuality education in Canada and globally;
* engage, educate and inform governmental and non-governmental actors to create enabling environments for the advancement and realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Canada and globally;
* ensure that governments around the world, including Canada, fulfill and implement their human rights obligations related to sexual and reproductive rights; and,
* strengthen and support the mobilization of a diverse movement in Canada and globally to advance a broad and intersectional sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda.

We work toward these ends through collaboration, policy engagement, advocacy, education and services. As part of a national and global movement, Action Canada also strives to learn from and exchange knowledge with its partners. We do this by collaborating with grassroots organizations across Canada and the global south in particular. Our associate organizations and Action Canada’s role as coordinator of the Sexual Rights Initiative, a north-south collaboration, play an important part in facilitating the organization’s research and advocacy on sexual health and rights. It is these partnerships on which we depend to strengthen our work and the national and global sexual health and rights movements.

Action Canada also offers a number of awards and scholarships. These awards and scholarships reward excellence in programs, and assist students in their studies in sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Further Reading: <http://www.sexualhealthandrights.ca>

# AFRO-CANADIAN/AMERICAN CULTURE

## Kwanzaa (African Canadian/African American)

On January 1st, 2019, the Canadian Kwanzaa Association (CKA) celebrated Kwanzaa, the Pan-African holiday, at Nathan Philips Square in Toronto for the first time; making it the first Canadian proclamation for Kwanzaa week in Canada’s history. The Toronto 3D Sign lit up in red, black and green, representing the lighting of the seven candles during the seven-day ceremony held from December 26th to January 1st.

This year marks the 52nd Anniversary of Kwanzaa since it was first established as a holiday in 1966, by Dr. Maulana Karenda in Oakland, California. Kwanzaa is rooted in the African culture, and derived from a Swahili phrase meaning, “first fruits of the harvest.” The observance was meant to help the [African diaspora in the Americas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_diaspora_in_the_Americas) or (pan Africans) reconnect to their African Culture. The holiday is now celebrated by pan Africans around the world to commemorate family, community, and culture. “Celebrating Kwanzaa in Canada is a means of expressing our emancipation and is a continuation of the efforts of our elders and ancestors who fought for our equality and inclusion in this country,” says Dewitt Lee III, Founder of the Canadian Kwanzaa Association. “As African Canadians, it is important to begin building our own cultural customs and traditions and Kwanzaa gives a foundation to begin that journey…” emphasized Lee.

Kwanzaa recognizes seven principles or Nguzo Saba in Swahili. They are Unity (Umoja), Self-Determination (Kujichagulia), Collective Work and Responsibility (Ujima), Cooperative Economics (Ujamaa), Purpose (Nia), Creativity (Kuumba), and Faith (Imani). Each day of the ceremony, one of the principles are introduced or reinforced and is represented by the lighting of one of the seven candles, placed on a Kinara or candlehold er. The seven candles are divided into patterns of; three red, one black and three green, respectively. As such, the 3D Toronto sign displayed the same colour patterns and glowed brightly in representation of a fully lit Kinara, which takes place in millions of households all over the world who are simultaneously celebrating Kwanzaa.

Further Reading:

<https://torontocaribbean.com/canadian-kwanzaa-association-celebrates-the-first-kwanzaa-week-in-canada-at-nathan-phillips-square-in-toronto/>

# ALBANIAN GOVERNMENT

## ****Independence Day****

Dita e Pavarësisë (“Independence Day” in English) was declared in 1912 by Ismail Qemali, founder of the modern Albanian state and its first head of state and government. After five hundred years of Ottoman domination, an independent Albania was proclaimed on November 28, 1912. On this day the Albanian flag was raised by Ismail Quemali in Flora, Albania to publicly proclaim the independence of Albania from its Ottoman authorities.

**History of Independence Day**

During the fifteenth century Albania enjoyed a brief period of independence under the legendary hero, Skanderbeg. Aside from this period of rule, the country did not enjoy independence until the 20th century. During the 19th century, Albanians resisted the Turks’ attempts to assimilate Albania. The leaders of Albania led their country with the rallying cry “The religion of Albanians is Albanianism!” They formed the Albanian League in 1878 to unite the country, adopt a new alphabet, and develop the native language, education, and literature. In 1908, the Albanians fought again, and by 1912, they succeeded in making the Turks agree to their demands for autonomy.

**Traditions, Customs and Activities**

Different ceremonies and concerts are organized to celebrate the historic day of Independence, especially in Tirana. The Albanian flag is ceremonially raised in Tirana, Albania’s capital, with the presence of the President, Prime Minister, Tirana’s mayor, and other officials. They also visit the national martyrs’ cemetery. Concerts in the center of Tirana feature famous Albanian singers and dancers. Even in the coldest of winters, many young people come out to the streets wrapped up in Albanian flags, while many Albanians stay home and watch the ceremonies on TV.

Further Reading: <http://aglobalworld.com/holidays-around-the-world/albania-independence-day/>

## Liberation Day

November 29 is a national holiday in Albania and remembers the day in 1944 that invading German and Italian troops were driven out of the country by Allied Forces. November 28 is celebrated as *Independence Day*, celebrating Independence from the Ottoman Empire, and November 29, 1944 as Liberation Day from the Nazi Regime.

During the war, Mussolini used Albania as a base to launch several attacks on Greece, most of them unsuccessful. In 1942, the National Liberation Front was set up in Albania to fight off the Italians and later the Germans. By the time that Italy was invaded by the Allied forces and Mussolini saw his last days, Germans decided to take over Albania, taking over the capital city of Tirana and driving the Albanian guerrillas into the surrounding hills. The Germans would later decide to recognize Albania as an independent and neutral state, creating a government front of German-friendly Albanians. Even so, the National Liberation Front pursued its efforts towards full independence from Germany and achieved complete liberation from the Nazis on November 28, 1944.

Almost everyone in Albania still has family memories and stories that were passed down from previous generations about the occupation during World War II. The day is to honor the victims of the war, and it celebrates freedom and hope for Albania. A national ceremony is held in Tirana, featuring a memorial service for the victims and national Albanian heroes that fought the occupying forces. The ceremonies are attended by the president, government officials, and representatives from many veterans associations. The ceremonies are broadcast so that all Albanians can follow the solemnities. For most Albanians it is a non-working day that, following Independence Day on November 28, gives reason for a longer break to have time to be with family and friends.

Further Reading: <http://aglobalworld.com/holidays-around-the-world/liberation-day-albania/>

# BAHÁ’I

## Ascension of Bahá’u’llah (Bahá’i)

The Ascension of the Bahá’u’llah is an important observance to members of the Bahá’i faith because in 1892, the leader of the Bahá’i faith died. This day is observed by prayers and readings.

Born to a noble family in Persia, he was generally held to be a wise and good man whose charity had earned him the nickname “Father of the Poor.” When word of the Bá'b reached him, he embraced the new religion and became one of its staunchest supporters. Unfortunately, his advocacy for the Bahá’i faith resulted in his imprisonment, torture and near official death sentence. When Bahá’u’llah was imprisoned in August 1852, he had a revelation from God telling him that he was the Promised One whose coming the Bá’b had foretold.

Released from prison in November, Bahá’u’llah’s wealth and property were taken away and he was banished to Baghdad, the first of four banishments he would suffer. In each place to which he was sent, his wisdom and character earned him the admiration of people from all walks of life, but in each case, the authorities, fearful of his influence, sent him further into exile. Thus he was moved from Baghdad to Constantinople, Adrianople, and finally the prison city of Akká in the Holy Land.

While the authorities plotted to be rid of him, his own half-brother, Mirzá Yahyá, who the Bá’b had appointed as head of the Faith until the Promised One arose, grew increasingly jealous of Bahá’u’llah’s influence among the Bá'bs. Yahyá attempted to claim the position of the Promised One for himself and plotted Bahá’u’llah’s death, once smearing poison on his teacup. Bahá’u’llah nearly died, and suffered from a hand tremor for the rest of his life.

His writings amount to some 100 volumes and were addressed to kings and commoners, friends and enemies, believers and deniers. The residence in which Bahá’u’llah spent his last years is now a holy land called the Bahji, and is a symbol of the Bahá’i faith.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27u%27ll%C3%A1h>

## Birth of the Bá’b (Bahá’i)

On October 20 of each year, Bahá’ís around the world celebrate the birth of one of the founders of their faith. The child born on October 20, 1819, in Shiraz, Persia, was of the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad and destined to become the Qa'im, the Promised One of Islam. But no portents[[1]](#footnote-1) marked his birth--he was, simply, a baby named Ali Muhammad and very little is known of the birth.

The Bá’b's father died when he was quite young, and his maternal uncle, Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, undertook the care of him.

Further Reading: <http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/bahai/the-birth-of-the-bab.aspx>

## Birth of Bahá’u’llah (Bahá’i)

The birth of Bahá’u’llah was on November 12, 1917 and became the founder and prophet of the Bahá’i faith. Bahá’u’llah means ‘The Glory of God,’ and within the Bahá’i faith it is believed that he was a messenger of God.

For members of the Bahá’i community, the celebration of Bahá’u’llah’s birthday is an important day of observance. Bahá’u’llah sought to establish world peace and harmony by honouring the teachings of unity found in all religious traditions.

**Bahá’is typically mark this day by abstaining[[2]](#footnote-2) from work** and many choose to partake in various forms of celebration, including the sharing of food, singing of songs, and reading of Bahá’i scriptures.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birth_of_Bah%C3%A1'u'll%C3%A1h>

## Day of the Covenant (Bahá’i)

The Day of the Covenant is the day when [Bahá’i](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_Faith) celebrate the appointment of [‘Abdu'l-Bahá](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%60Abdu%27l-Bah%C3%A1" \o "`Abdu'l-Bahá)’ as the Centre of [Bahá’u’llah's covenant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covenant_of_Bah%C3%A1%27u%27ll%C3%A1h)[[3]](#footnote-3). It occurs yearly on either November 25 or 26 depending on when [Naw Ruz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naw_Ruz) falls in that year.

`Abdu'l-Bahá had stated that since May 23 was also the day that the [Bá’b](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%A1b) declared his mission, and should be exclusively associated with him, the day should under no circumstances be celebrated as his day of birth. However, as the Bahá'ís begged for a day to be celebrated as `Abdu'l-Bahá's birthday, he gave them November 26, 181 days after the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, to be observed as the day of the appointment of the Centre of the Covenant. The holiday was originally known as the Jashn-i-A’zam in [Persian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_language) (The Greatest Festival), because `Abdu'l-Bahá was known as the Greatest Branch; in the West, the holy day became known as the Day of the Covenant.

The day is one of two [Bahá'í holy days](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_calendar#Holy_days) where work does **not** need to be suspended.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day_of_the_Covenant_(Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD)>

## Declaration of the Bá’b (Bahá’i)

On May 23, Bahá’is around the world celebrate the birth of the Bahá’i Faith. The holy day marks the Declaration of the Bá’b, who in 1844 announced that He was a new divine Messenger sent to herald a new age for humanity and to prepare the way for Bahá’u’llah, the universal Messenger of God.

The house in Shiraz, Iran, where the Bá’b first made His announcement had been preserved as a Bahá’i holy site, but in 1979 it was destroyed by a mob aided by Revolutionary Guards.

**The Declaration of the Bá’b is one of nine holy days during the year on which the Bahá’i suspend work.**

Adapted from <http://news.bahai.org/story/715>

## First Day of Ridván (Bahá’i)

Ridván means [paradise](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise), and is named for the [Garden of Ridván](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_of_Ridv%C3%A1n,_Baghdad) outside of [Baghdad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baghdad), where Bahá'u'lláh stayed for twelve days after the [Ottoman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) exiled him from the city of Tehran and before commencing his journey to [Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople). It is the holiest Bahá'í festival, and is also referred to as the "Most Great Festival" and the "King of Festivals".

Ridván as one of two "Most Great Festivals", along with the Declaration of the [Bá’b](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%A1b). He then specified the first, ninth, and twelfth days to be holy days; these days mark the days of Bahá’u’llah’s arrival, the arrival of his family and their departure from the Ridván garden, respectively.

**Followers should not work nor go to school on that day.**

The Festival of Ridván festival properly starts at two hours before sunset on that day, which symbolises the time that Bahá'u'lláh entered the garden. **On the first, ninth, and twelfth days, which are** [**Bahá'í Holy Days**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_calendar#Bah.C3.A1.27.C3.AD_Holy_Days)**, work is prohibited.** Currently, the three holy days are usually observed with a community gathering where prayers are shared, followed with a celebration.

Further Reading: [http://bahai-library.com/walbridge\_encyclopedia\_Ridván](http://bahai-library.com/walbridge_encyclopedia_ridvan)

## Intercalary Days (Bahá’i)

Ayyám-i-Há refers to a period of [intercalary[[4]](#footnote-4) days](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercalary_day) in the [Bahá'í calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_calendar), when [Bahá'ís](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_Faith) celebrate the Festival of Ayyám-i-Há. The four or five days of this period are inserted between the last two months of the calendar.

The number of days between the 18th and 19th months (Muk and `Alá'), and therefore the length of Ayyám-i-Há, vary according to the timing of the following [vernal[[5]](#footnote-5) equinox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vernal_equinox) so that the next year always starts on the day of the vernal equinox. Prior to 172 B.E. (2015 A.D.), Ayyám-i-Há was from sunset on February 25 to sunset on March 1 which caused the calendar to be automatically synchronized with Gregorian [leap years](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leap_years).

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayy%C3%A1m-i-H%C3%A1>

## Martyrdom of the Bá’b (Bahá’i)

This holy day commemorates the death of the Bá’b. He was executed on 9 July 1850 by a firing squad along with a young follower. A version of the story is told where after the smoke from so many rifles (approx. 750) had dissipated[[6]](#footnote-6), the Bá’b could not be found. Evidently the bullets had only cut through the rope that was suspending them on the barracks wall. After a frantic search, he was recaptured and again brought before the firing squad and this time he and his follower perished.

Further Reading: <http://bahaiblog.net/site/2011/07/changeless-faith-the-martyrdom-of-the-bab-and-jesus-christ/>

## Eid-e-Navroz - Persian New Year (Bahá’i/Zoroastrian)

The UN General Assembly, in 2010 recognized the International Day of Navroz, describing it as a Spring Festival of Persian origin which has been celebrated for over 3,000 years.

About 300 million people worldwide celebrate Navroz, with traditions and rituals particularly strong in the Balkans, the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions, the Caucasus, Central and South Asia, and the Middle East. Events may include folk dance performances, special concerts, and tree planting ceremonies.

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/nowruz-day>

## Ninth Day of Ridván (Bahá’i)

For [Bahá’is](http://bahaiteachings.org/bahai-faith), the twelve-day period between April 21st and May 2nd marks the holiest and happiest festival of the year. It is known as Ridván (pronounced Rez-wan). These Bahá’i Holy Days, which celebrate the beginning of the Bahá’i Faith in 1863, as its Founder [Bahá’u’llah](http://bahaiteachings.org/bahaullah-founder) prepared for exile, also recognize a period of great turmoil in Bahá’i history and signifies the transformation of suffering and oppression into joy.

On April 29, 1863, the ninth day of Ridván, the flooding Tigris receded enough so that Bahá’u’llah’s family could cross the river and join him. This symbol – the reunification and strength of the bond of family, and by extension the unity of the entire human family – permeates the meaning of the ninth day of Ridván.

Further Reading: [http://bahaiteachings.org/celebrating-the-9th-day-of-Ridván](http://bahaiteachings.org/celebrating-the-9th-day-of-ridvan)

## Twelfth Day of Ridván (Bahá’i)

The twelfth day celebrates the commencement of the prophethood[[7]](#footnote-7) of Bahá’u’llah, the founder of Bahá’i. The twelfth day is the last day of the festival and signals the end of the holiday period.

Ridván means “paradise” in the Persian language and is named for the Garden of Ridván, located outside of Baghdad. After Bahá’u’llah was exiled from Baghdad in 1863 by the Ottoman Empire, he stayed in the Garden of Ridván for Twelve Days before leaving for Constantinople (present day Istanbul).

Further Reading: [http://bahaiteachings.org/celebrating-the-9th-day-of-Ridván](http://bahaiteachings.org/celebrating-the-9th-day-of-ridvan)

## World Religion Day (Bahá’i)

World Religion Day is an [interfaith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interfaith) observance initiated in 1950 by the National [Spiritual Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_Assembly) of the [Bahá'is](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%ADs) of the United States, celebrated on the third Sunday in January each year. Though initiated in the United States, World Religion Day has come to be celebrated internationally.

Its purpose is to promote the idea that the spiritual principles underlying the world's religions are harmonious, and to suggest that religions play a role in unifying humanity. In April 2002, the [Universal House of Justice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_House_of_Justice), the international Bahá’i governing body, published a letter “To the World’s Religious Leaders", in which it was stated that:

*“Interfaith discourse, if it is to contribute meaningfully to healing the ills that afflict a desperate humanity, must now address honestly ... the implications of the over-arching truth ... that God is one and that, beyond all diversity of cultural expression and human interpretation, religion is likewise one.*[*”*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Religion_Day#cite_note-2)

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Religion_Day>

# BUDDHISM

## 14th Dalai Lama’s Birthday (Buddhism/Tibetan)

The Dalai Lama’s birthday is celebrated world-wide by many Buddhist. The Dalai Lama has lived in exile from Tibet since 1959 due to ongoing harassment by the Chinese government in the latter’s bid to take over the country.

Further Reading: <http://www.voanews.com/content/dharamsala-celebrates-dalai-lama-80-birthday/2856232.html>

## Asalha Puja Day (Buddhism)

Asalha Puja day is observed by *Theravada* Buddhists[[8]](#footnote-8) and is a celebration of the anniversary of the day on which Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon in Deer Park[[9]](#footnote-9). It also commemorates the beginning of the worship of the three jewels of Buddhism – the Buddha[[10]](#footnote-10), the Dharma[[11]](#footnote-11) and the Sangha[[12]](#footnote-12). This day is one of the most sacred days in Buddhism.

After attaining enlightenment[[13]](#footnote-13) on the full moon of Visakha, the Buddha had attained ultimate peace and tranquility. It was not until two months later, at Deer Park, that he delivered his first sermon.

Further Reading: <http://www.worldreligionnews.com/religion-news/buddhism/everything-you-need-to-know-about-buddhist-asalha-puja-day>

## Bodhi Day - Buddha's Enlightenment (Buddhism)

Bodhi Dayis the Buddhist holiday that commemorates the daythat the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama (Shakyamuni), experienced enlightenment, also known as Bodhiin Sanskrit and Pali. According to tradition, Siddhartha had recently forsaken[[14]](#footnote-14) years of extreme ascetic[[15]](#footnote-15) practices and resolved to sit under a [peepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peepal) tree and simply meditate until he found the root of suffering, and how to liberate oneself from it.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhi_Day>

## Buddha’s Death/Nirvana Day (Buddhism/Jainism)

Parinirvana Day, or Nirvana Day is a *Mahayana* Buddhist[[16]](#footnote-16) holiday celebrated in East Asia. By some it is celebrated on the 8th of February, but by most on the 15th. It celebrates the day when the Buddha is said to have achieved Parinirvana[[17]](#footnote-17), or complete Nirvana, upon the death of his physical body. Buddhists celebrate the death of the Buddha because they believe that since he was enlightened, he was free from the pain of physical existence. Passages from the Nirvana Sutra describing the Buddha's last days of life are often read on Parinirvana Day. Other observances include meditation and visits to Buddhist temples and monasteries. Also, the day is a time to think about one's own future death and on the deaths of loved ones.

This thought process reflects the Buddhist teachings on transience. Some Western Buddhist groups also celebrate Parinirvana Day.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama_Buddha>

## Buddha’s Descent from Tushita Heaven (Buddhism/Tibetan)

Tuṣita(Sanskrit) or Tusita (Pāli) is one of the six deva[[18]](#footnote-18)-worlds of the Kāmadhātu, located between the Yāma heaven and the Nirmāṇarati heaven. Like the other heavens, Tuṣita is said to be reachable through meditation. It is the heaven where the Bodhisattva Śvetaketu (Pāli: *Setaketu* "White Banner") resided before being reborn on Earth as [Gautama Buddha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama_Buddha), the historical Buddha; and is, likewise, the heaven where the Bodhisattva Nātha ("Protector") currently resides, who will later be born as the next Buddha, [Maitreya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maitreya).

Further Reading: <https://buddhistartnews.wordpress.com/2013/12/04/lhabab-duchen-the-day-buddha-descended-from-tushita-heavens/>

## Chokhor Korway Ducchen Festival (Buddhism /Tibetan)

The First Turning of the Dharma Wheel.

The first turning began when the [historical Buddha](http://buddhism.about.com/od/lifeofthebuddha/a/buddhalife.htm) delivered his first sermon after his [enlightenment](http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhismglossarye/g/enlightendef.htm). In this sermon he explained the [Four Noble Truths](http://buddhism.about.com/od/thefournobletruths/a/fournobletruths.htm)[[19]](#footnote-19), which would be the foundation of all the teachings he gave in his life. He had realized something that was beyond ordinary knowledge and experience. If he had simply told people what he had realized, no one would have understood him. So, instead, he developed a path of practice so that people could realize enlightenment for themselves.

In his book The Third Turning of the Wheel: Wisdom of the Samdhinirmocana Sutra, Zen teacher Reb Anderson[[20]](#footnote-20) explained how the Buddha began his teaching:

Reb Anderson - Zen Master

"He had to speak in a language that the people listening to him could understand, so in this first turning of the dharma wheel he offered a conceptual, logical teaching. He showed us how to analyze our experience and he set out a path for people to find freedom and liberate themselves from suffering."

Further Reading: <http://buddhism.about.com/od/mahayanabuddhism/a/Three-Turnings-Of-The-Dharma-Wheel.htm>

## Dharma Day - Termination of the Rainy Season (Buddhism)

Dharma Day is one of the most important dates in the Buddhist calendar as it marks the day the religion was established. It is usually celebrated with readings from the Buddhist scriptures, and is an opportunity to reflect deeply on their content.

Further Reading: <http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/buddhism/dharma-day-a-universal-celebration-of-the-buddhas-teachings.aspx>

## Fall Ohigan (Buddhism) Japanese

The word “Ohigan” is derived from Sanskrit[[21]](#footnote-21) and means “reaching nirvana”. It originally meant achieving the perfect state of enlightenment by leaving the worldly world, but the word turned into a custom of making a visit to graves to hold a memorial service for ancestors that have passed away. Even though it is derived from Buddhism, the custom of making a visit to a grave is only practiced in Japan. It is said that the idea was born from the mix of Buddhism and Japanese Shintoism, which pays respect to nature and ancestors.

Further Reading: <http://tadaimajp.com/2015/09/ohigan/>

## Guan Yin Birthday (Buddhism/Taiwanese)

The nineteenth day of the second month of the lunar year is the birthday of Guan Yin. On that day, young men and women gather to burn joss sticks[[22]](#footnote-22) and worship either in the temple hall or in the court area. Some offer oil for Guan Yin's ever-burning lamp and pray for health and peace; others offer long silk scrolls in the hope of bearing a son. If a son is born, the parents will put him under Guan Yin's lotus seat to proclaim their faith in Buddhism and make the baby the adopted child of Guan Yin. By doing so, they think Guan Yin will bless the child with longevity. Monks and nuns set up assemblies in honour of Guan Yin. The places of worship are solemn and grand. Incense and flowers are also offered to Guan Yin.

Women eat a vegetarian diet from the first until the nineteenth of the second month, the birthday of Kuan Yin. This is called Kuan Yin's vegetarian fast. This practice is observed again from the 1st 19th of the sixth and the ninth months in the lunar year.

Further Reading: <http://traditions.cultural-china.com/en/14T35T1264.html>

## Guru Purnima (Buddhism/Jainism/Hinduism)

Guru[[23]](#footnote-23) Purnimais an [Indian and Nepalese](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Culture_of_India_and_Nepal&action=edit&redlink=1) festival dedicated to spiritual and academic teachers. This festival is traditionally celebrated by [Hindus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindus), [Jains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism) and [Buddhists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhists), to pay their respects to their teachers and express their gratitude. The festival is celebrated on the [full moon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full_moon) day ([*Purnima*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full_moon)) in the Hindu month of [*Ashadha*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashadha)(June–July) of the [Shaka Samvat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaka_Samvat), ([Hindu calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_calendar) in [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) and [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal)). This day marks the first peak of the [lunar cycle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_cycle) after the [peak](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_solstice) of the [solar cycle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Season).

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima>

## Kathina Ceremony/Pavarana Day (Buddhism)

The Kathina festival is a major observance of [Theravada Buddhism](http://buddhism.about.com/od/theravadabuddhism/a/theravadabasic.htm). It is a time for lay people to offer cloth for robes and other necessities to the monastic [sangha](http://buddhism.about.com/od/abuddhistglossary/g/sanghadef.htm). Kathina takes place every year in the four weeks following the end of [Vassa](http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhismglossaryv/g/Vassadef.htm)[[24]](#footnote-24).

Appreciating Kathina requires going back to the time of [the Buddha](http://buddhism.about.com/od/lifeofthebuddha/a/buddhalife.htm) and the [first Buddhist monks](http://buddhism.about.com/od/thefirstbuddhists/a/firstmonks.htm). We begin with the story of some monks who spent a rainy season together. This story is from the Mahavagga, which is a section of the Pali [Vinaya-pitaka.](http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhismglossaryv/g/Vinaya-definition.htm)

**Monks and the Rainy Season Retreat**

The historical Buddha spent most of his life in India, which is known for its summer [monsoon](http://geography.about.com/od/physicalgeography/a/monsoon.htm) season. As the number of his followers grew, he realized that hundreds of [monks](http://buddhism.about.com/od/becomingabuddhist/fl/About-Buddhist-Monks.htm) and [nuns](http://buddhism.about.com/od/Monasticism/fl/About-Buddhist-Nuns.htm) traveling on foot through the sodden countryside could damage crops and injure wildlife. So the Buddha made a rule that monks and nuns would not travel during the monsoon, but would spend the rainy season together in meditation and study. This is the origin of Vassa.

Further Reading: <http://buddhism.about.com/od/thefirstbuddhists/a/Kathina.htm>

## Losar – Tibetan New Year (Buddhism/Tibetan)

Losar is the Tibetan word for “new year,” and its celebration predates Buddhism in Tibet. “Lo” means “year” and “sar” means “new”. Losar is the most important holiday/festival in Tibet and runs for three days. On the first day celebrations are usually restricted to the family, with the second and third days being the time to visit and exchange gifts with friends and more distant relatives.

Losar rituals include cleaning and painting houses, wearing new clothes, and resolving quarrels and debts. Visiting monasteries and temples are also part of the Losar traditions where Tibetans would make offerings. Buddhist monks would adorn the monasteries with the finest decorations and conduct many ceremonies marking the new year.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Losar>

## Lunar New Year - Spring Festival (Buddhism/Confucian/Daoist)

This day marks the beginning of a new year for people of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Mongolian ancestry and their Diaspora[[25]](#footnote-25). Many followers of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism also hold these days important for its symbolism of renewal. Governments, businesses and markets use the Gregorian calendar to regulate the days but use the lunisolar calendar to mark cultural and traditional days of significance such as the New Year.

For many in East Asia and South East Asia, the Lunar New Year is associated with spring and regardless of one's location it is always marked with great community festivities, gathering of families and feasting.

In Korea, and for many of Korean ancestry, this day is referred to as ''Seollal.'' It is day when families visit each other paying respects to their elders. Games and food are always part of the festivities.

Festivities vary but are mainly centered around the family, visiting friends and giving, (by married couples), red coloured envelopes to the elderly or unmarried juniors. These “red pockets” often contain money.

In Vietnam, the day is referred to as ''Tet''. Similar to the Chinese and Korean New Year traditions, Tet is considered a family oriented holiday visiting family and friends and feasting.

In Mongolia, and for many of Mongolian ancestry, the lunar new year is referred to as ''Tsagaan Sar.'' This day is marked by family gatherings with a large feast and the giving of gifts. Tsagaan Sar is commonly celebrated on the same day as the Chinese Lunar New Year but has also been celebrated in the same time as Losar, the Tibetan New Year, which sometimes occurs one lunar month after.

Further Reading: <https://prezi.com/yzlhmr2ilqhh/celebrations-of-buddhism-daoism-confucianism-shinto-and/>

Further Reading: <http://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/festivals/spring-festival/chinese-zodiac-years-of-2011-to-2020.htm>

## Magha Puja Day - Lantern Festival - (Buddhism)

This Buddhist festival is also known as the Fourfold Assembly or Sangha Day. Magha Puja Day is one of the most important Buddhist festivals. It is a celebration in honour of the Sangha, or the Buddhist community. For some Buddhists, Sangha refers only to monks and nuns. It is a chance for people to reaffirm their commitment to Buddhist practices and traditions.

Magha Puja Day commemorates the spontaneous gathering of 1,250 enlightened monks (Arahants) who heard the Buddha preach at the location of Veluvana Vihara (Deer Park). At this gathering, the Buddha gave his first sermon, or recitation of the Patimokkha (the rules and regulations of the monastic order). Sangha is the term used meaning the Buddhist spiritual community. On Sangha Day, Buddhists celebrate both the ideal and realization of a spiritual community. The Sangha is precious in Buddhism because, without it, it would be challenging for those in the community who wish to venerate or share aspirations with the spiritual life. Magha Puja Day is a traditional time for exchange of gifts and has become a prominent festival among Western Buddhists, even though it is less well known in the West. Celebrations vary, but can include chanting, meditation, the lighting of oil lamps, and the reaffirmation of people's commitment to Buddhist practice.

Further Reading: <http://www.grad.cmu.ac.th/eng/index.php/magha-puja-day>

## Mahayana New Year (Buddhism)

Mid-January marks the celebration of Mahayana Buddhist New Year celebration (although many Mahayana Buddhist such as Japenese Zen, celebrate the New Year on December 31st).

The New Year is a time to reflect. What went well? What didn't go well? Did you notice any patterns? Based on what you've noticed what are your intentions for the New Year? This is a way to move into the New Year with a modicum[[26]](#footnote-26) of awakening.

Further Reading: <http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/buddhism/articles/the-buddhist-and-the-new-year.aspx>

## Obon (Buddhism/Confucism)

**Obon** or just **Bon** is a Japanese Buddhist custom to honor the spirits of one's ancestors. This Buddhist-Confucian[[27]](#footnote-27) custom has evolved into a family reunion holiday during which people return to ancestral family places and visit and clean their ancestors' graves, and when the spirits of ancestors are supposed to revisit the household altars. It has been celebrated in Japan for more than 500 years and traditionally includes a dance, known as Bon-Odori.

The festival of Obon lasts for three days; however the starting date varies within different regions of Japan. When the [lunar calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_calendar) was changed to the [Gregorian calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar) at the beginning of the [Meiji era](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meiji_era)[[28]](#footnote-28), the localities in Japan reacted differently and this resulted in three different times of Obon. "Shichigatsu Bon" ("Bon in July") is based on the solar calendar and is celebrated around the 15th of July in eastern Japan ([Kantō region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kant%C5%8D_region) such as [Tokyo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokyo), [Yokohama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yokohama) and the [Tōhoku region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C5%8Dhoku_region)), coinciding with [Chūgen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C5%ABgen). "Hachigatsu Bon" (Bon approx. August) is based on the lunar calendar, is most commonly celebrated around the 15th of August. "Kyū Bon" (Old Bon) is celebrated on the 15th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, and so differs each year. "Kyū Bon" is celebrated in areas like the northern part of the Kantō region, [Chūgoku region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C5%ABgoku_region), [Shikoku](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shikoku), and the [Okinawa Prefecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okinawa_Prefecture). These three days are not listed as public holidays but **it is customary that people are given leave**.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bon_Festival>

## Spring Ohigan (Buddhism) Japanese

In Japan, people remember their ancestors. (Higan orOhigan), and is a week of Buddhist services in Japan during the [March](http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/march-equinox.html) and [September Equinox](http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/september-equinox.html). Both equinoxes have been national holidays since the Meiji period (1868-1912). "Higan" means the “other shore” and refers to dead spirits who reach Nirvana after crossing the river of existence. It celebrates the spiritual move from the world of suffering to the world of enlightenment.

Further Reading: <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-03-17-japan_Buddhist_17_ST_N.htm>

## Sukyamuni Buddha’s Enlightenment (Buddhism)

The following excerpts about the life of Buddha and enlightenment are taken from Geshe Kelsang Gyatso’s[[29]](#footnote-29) book, [*Introduction to Buddhism*](http://kadampa.org/books/introduction-to-buddhism):

*“Siddhartha then made his way to a place near Bodh Gaya in India, where he found a suitable site for meditation. There he remained, emphasizing a meditation called “space-like concentration on the Dharmakaya” in which he focused single-pointedly on the ultimate nature of all phenomena.*

*After training in this meditation for six years he realized that he was very close to attaining full enlightenment, and so he walked to Bodh Gaya where, on the full moon day of the fourth month of the lunar calendar, he seated himself beneath the Bodhi Tree in the meditation posture and vowed not to rise from meditation until he had attained perfect enlightenment. With this determination he entered the space-like concentration on the Dharmakaya.*

*As dusk fell, Devaputra Mara, the chief of all the demons, or maras, in this world, tried to disturb Siddhartha’s concentration by conjuring up many fearful apparitions. He manifested hosts of terrifying demons, some throwing spears, some firing arrows, some trying to burn him with fire, and some hurling boulders and even mountains at him.*

*Through the force of his concentration, the weapons, rocks, and mountains appeared to him as a rain of fragrant flowers, and the raging fires became like offerings of rainbow lights.*

*Seeing that Siddhartha could not be frightened into abandoning his meditation, Devaputra Mara tried instead to distract him by manifesting countless beautiful women, but Siddhartha responded by developing even deeper concentration.*

Further Reading: <http://kadampa.org/reference/buddhas-enlightenment>

## Theravada Days of Mindfulness (Buddhism)

In the [Buddhist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism) tradition, this means [insight](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom_in_Buddhism) into the true nature of reality, namely as the [Three Marks of Existence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_marks_of_existence): impermanence, suffering or unsatisfactoriness, and the realization of non-self. [Presectarian Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presectarian_Buddhism) emphasized the practice of [Dhyana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhy%C4%81na_in_Buddhism)[[30]](#footnote-30), but early in the history of Buddhism Vipassanā gained a prominent place in the teachings. It deepens personal experience of insight meditation, which is rooted in the cultivation of mindfulness. In the company of peers and colleagues, retreatants[[31]](#footnote-31) will explore the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as taught in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Discourse* given by the Buddha, the foundational teaching of all contemporary mindfulness-based applications. This is a profound teaching that encourages us to place the path of freedom and compassion in our lives by nurturing a liberated and compassionate heart.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mindfulness>

## Tibetan Buddhist Enlightenment – Saga Dawa - (Buddhism/Tibetan)

Tibetan Buddhsm, the teaching of the Buddha as practiced and taught in Tibet, is at last becoming known to the world. Because of Tibet’s secluded location, the Buddhist tradition developed there for fourteen centuries in relative isolation, was unknown or misunderstood by the outside world. A turning point came in the late 1950's, when the Communist Chinese takeover precipitated the migration of Tibetan teachers to India. Since then Tibetan Buddhist teachers have traveled further abroad and have established teaching centers that are now flourishing in Japan, Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe, and North and South America. For the first time in history, people from all over the world are able to learn directly from authentic sources about how Tibetan Buddhism was practiced in Tibet. The Tibetan migration has found a particularly receptive audience in the United States – which is a country of immigrants. Buddhism is now one of the fastest growing religions in that country – not the least because of the rise in popularity of its Tibetan denomination.

Further Reading: <https://sites.google.com/site/karmakagyucalendar/Duchen/Saga-Dawa-Duchen>

Further Reading: <http://www.sakya.org/introtibetanbuddhism.html>

## Ullumbana Ghost Festival (Buddhism/Taoist)

The Ghost Festival (also known as Zhongyuan Festival by Taoists or Yu Lan Pen Festival by Buddhists) is the day to pay respects to the deceased by offering sacrifices. In Chinese culture, it is thought that all ghosts will come out from hell on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month, so the day is called the Ghost Day and the seventh lunar month is called the Ghost Month.

In China, people also have the custom of offering sacrifices to the deceased during the [Spring Festival](http://www.yourchineseastrology.com/holidays/spring-festival/), [Qingming Festival](http://www.yourchineseastrology.com/holidays/qingming-festival/), and the [Double Ninth Festival](http://www.yourchineseastrology.com/holidays/double-ninth-festival/). But different from these above festivals, the Ghost Festival is the day that all ghosts will come out to visit the living. Also, people only offer sacrifices to their ancestors and relatives on all the other above festivals. During the Ghost Festival, however, besides ancestors and relatives, people will offer sacrifices to all the ghosts or spirits. The Ghost Festival is regarded as the most important one among these festivals that offer sacrifices to the deceased.

In China, people believe that in the Ghost month, the gate to hell[[32]](#footnote-32) will open to allow the ghosts and spirits to come back to the living world. During the month, those with families will visit them and those who are alone will roam on the streets to seek food and entertainment.

Family members usually offer sacrifice to their deceased ancestors and relatives during the month and on the Ghost day. They are honored with delicious food three times a day. The family’s ancestral tablets and photographs will be put on a table with incense burning near them. People also pay tribute to those unknown wandering ghosts with food and burn joss paper to please them on the 15th (some places on the 14th) day of the 7th lunar month to avoid harm by them.

Buddhists and Taoists usually perform ceremonies on this day to help the ghosts ease their sufferings. They will set altars for them and chant scriptures. Monks often throw rice or small portions of food into the air to distribute them to the ghosts.

On the evening of the Ghost day, people also make lanterns and float them on the river to help their relatives find their way back home. The lanterns are usually lotus flower-shaped with lights or candles. Some people also write their ancestors’ name on the lanterns.

When the ghosts and the suffering spirits arrive many things should be avoided…

* Don't stroll at night.
* Don't swim. It is said that the drowned evil ghosts might try to drown you in order to find victims for them to rebirth.
* As the month is considered to be inauspicious, don't move to new houses, start new businesses or marry.
* Don't hang clothes outside at night.
* Do not pick up coins or money found on the street and never bring it home.
* Do not step on or kick the offerings by the roadside. If you step on something by accident, you should apologize aloud to appease the evil ghosts.
* Do not wear red because ghosts are attracted to red.
* Don't sing and whistle as these may attract ghosts.
* Keep away from walls because ghosts like sticking to walls.
* If you are born during the ghost month, avoid celebrating your birthday at night. It's better to celebrate during the daytime.

Further Reading: <http://www.yourchineseastrology.com/holidays/ghost-festival/>

## Visakha Puja - Wesak or Vesak Buddha’s Birthday - (Buddhism/Tibetan)

Visakha comes from the Sanskrit word Vaiśākha and is an annual holiday practiced by Buddhists in South Asian and South East Asian countries like Nepal, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Indonesia and India. It commemorates the Birth, Enlightenment, and Final Nirvana of the Buddha. This is the major religious holiday for Asian Buddhists and is always celebrated on a full moon day in May.

It is said that during the full moon of Taurus[[33]](#footnote-33), Buddha descends from his high place to bestow spiritual blessings on the world. It is thought that at this time, great expansions of consciousness, which are not possible at other times, become possible, and that energies are transmitted that assist humanity in taking the next steps on the path of spiritual growth.

The decision to agree to celebrate Visakha as the Buddha’s birthday was taken at the first Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) held in Sri Lanka in 1950.

Buddha Day is celebrated in a number of ways around the world. There is often the ceremonial release of small creatures, such as birds or turtles, as a symbol of the Buddha’s compassion for all things. A statue of the baby Buddha may be bathed in a ritual commemorating his birth. Dharma talks are given, often on the eight precepts (teachings) of Buddhism, since this ceremony is intended to reflect on the life of the Buddha and the goal for all of enlightenment. People will dress simply, wear light colours, sleep on the ground and not on comfortable mattresses, eat one or two meals during the day, and surrender many habitual pleasures to celebrate the birth of the Buddha and to mourn his passing. Sitting and/or walking meditation may be a part of the festivities as well. Traditionally, vegetarian meals are served. In the evening, candlelight or lantern processionals end the celebration. This occasion is observed by millions of Buddhists throughout the world.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vesak>

# CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

## Armenian Genocide Memorial Day

The Armenian Genocide, also known as the Armenian Holocaust, was the [Ottoman[[34]](#footnote-34) government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Government_(Ottoman_Empire))'s systematic extermination of 1.5 million [Armenians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenians), mostly Ottoman citizens within the Ottoman Empire and its successor state, the [Republic of Turkey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey). The starting date is conventionally held to be 24 April 1915, the day that Ottoman authorities rounded up, arrested, and deported [235 to 270 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportation_of_Armenian_intellectuals_on_24_April_1915) from [Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul) to [Ankara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ankara)[[35]](#footnote-35), the majority of whom were eventually murdered. The genocide was carried out during and after [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) and implemented in two phases: the wholesale killing of the able-bodied male population through massacre and subjection of army conscripts to forced labour, followed by the deportation of women, children, the elderly, and the infirm on [death marches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_march) leading to the [Syrian desert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_desert). Driven forward by military escorts, the deportees were deprived of food and water and subjected to periodic robbery, rape, and massacre. Other [indigenous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples) and Christian ethnic groups such as the [Assyrians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_people) and the [Ottoman Greeks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Greeks) were similarly targeted for extermination by the [Ottoman government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Government_(Ottoman_Empire)) in the [Assyrian genocide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_genocide) and the [Greek genocide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_genocide), and their treatment is considered by some historians to be part of the same genocidal policy. Most [Armenian diaspora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_diaspora) communities around the world came into being as a direct result of the genocide.

[Raphael Lemkin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael_Lemkin)[[36]](#footnote-36) was explicitly moved by the Armenian annihilation to define systematic and premeditated exterminations within legal parameters and to coin the word [*genocide*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide)in 1943. The Armenian Genocide is acknowledged to have been one of the first modern genocides, because scholars point to the organized manner in which the killings were carried out in order to eliminate the Armenians, and it is the second most-studied case of genocide after the [Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust).

[Turkey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey), the [successor state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Successor_state) of the Ottoman Empire, [denies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Genocide_denial) the word *genocide* as an accurate term for the mass killings of Armenians that began under Ottoman rule in 1915. It has in recent years been faced with repeated calls to recognize them as genocide. To date, 29 countries have [officially recognized the mass killings as genocide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Genocide_recognition), as have most genocide scholars and historians.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Genocide>

## Boxing Day (Canadian Government)

Many people in Canada have a day off work and many of them visit stores that start their annual Boxing Day sales. Some shoppers even start waiting outside stores in the small hours of the morning and many stores open earlier than usual. Now, the sales often last for a whole week between Christmas Day and New Year's Eve and are known as the "Boxing Week Sales". In some areas, particularly in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario, stores are not open on Boxing Day and the post-Christmas sales start on December 27.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boxing_Day>

## Canada Day (Canadian Government)

Canada Day, known in French as Fête du Canada, is observed on July 1st of every year. It marks the anniversary of Canada's Confederation in 1867, when the then British colonies of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia became one nation, the Dominion of Canada, under the British North American Act of 1867. The year 1879 marked the first celebration of this day, then known as Dominion Day. Major celebrations were held in 1917, on the 50th anniversary of Confederation.

Further Reading: <http://www.todocanada.ca/Canada-Day-in-Toronto-GTA/>

## Christmas Day (Canadian Government & Christianity)

Christmas or Christmas Day ([Old English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English_language): *Crīstesmæsse*, meaning "[Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ)'s [Mass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_(liturgy))") is an annual festival commemorating the birth of [Jesus Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), observed most commonly on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration among billions of people around the world. A [feast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feast_day) central to the [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) [liturgical[[37]](#footnote-37) year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgical_year), it is prepared for by the season of [Advent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advent) or the [Nativity Fast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nativity_Fast) and initiates the season of [Christmastide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmastide), which historically in the West lasts [twelve days](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Days_of_Christmas) and culminates on [Twelfth Night](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_Night_(holiday)); in some traditions, Christmastide includes an [Octave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octave_(liturgical))[[38]](#footnote-38). Christmas Day is a public [holiday](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holiday) in [many of the world's nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_holidays_by_country) and is celebrated culturally by a large number of non-Christian people. Christmas Day is an integral part of the [holiday season](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_and_holiday_season) although some Christian groups reject the celebration. In several countries, celebrating [Christmas Eve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_Eve) on December 24 has the main focus rather than the 25th, with gift-giving and sharing a traditional meal with the family.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas>

## Easter Monday (Canadian Government & Christianity)

Easter Monday is the day after Easter Sunday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, according to the Christian Bible. Easter Monday is also a holiday for many Canadians. Easter Monday in Canada is a time for Christians to traditionally reflect on Jesus Christ's crucifixion, death and resurrection.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_Monday>

## Good Friday (Canadian Government and Christianity)

Good Friday occurs two days before Easter Sunday. It is the day when Christians commemorate the crucifixion[[39]](#footnote-39) of Jesus Christ, which plays an important part in the Christian faith. It is also a statutory holiday in all Canadian provinces and territories except Quebec, where it is partially observed.

Christians may attend special church services, even if they do not attend church regularly during the rest of the year. Good Friday is a day of mourning and quiet prayer among many Christians. The candles are often extinguished and statues, paintings and crosses may be draped in black, purple or gray cloth. Some Catholics observe a partial fast on Good Friday and do not eat any meat.

Hot cross buns are a traditional treat on Good Friday. These are small bread-like buns, made from dough that contains raisins, currants and other dried fruit. The top of a hot cross bun is marked with a cross and covered with a sugar glaze. The cross may be cut into the bun or marked with a special dough that remains pale even after it has been baked. Hot cross buns may be eaten as they are, split and spread with butter or toasted.

For Canadians who are not Christians, Good Friday is the start of a three or four-day weekend culminating on Easter Monday. This is a welcome spring break, which some people use to visit family or friends. It is also a popular time to take a short vacation.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Friday>

## Labour Day (Canadian Government)

Labour Day in Canada is observed annually on the first Monday in September. It celebrates the accomplishments and advancements made in the workers' rights movement in the mid to late 19th century.

Labour Day has its roots in 1872 when a workers’ parade was held in support of the Toronto Typographical Union, the members of which had been on strike, demanding a 58 hour work week. The workers began as a 2,000 person crowd but became a group of 10,000 when their march arrived at Queen's Park. The employer of the typographical workers, George Brown[[40]](#footnote-40), accused the union leaders of plotting conspiracy. Under an outdated law from 1792 prohibiting trade union activity, the strike leaders were arrested.



Two months later, under public pressure, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald passed the Trade Unions Act through the House of Commons, repealing what he called "barbarous laws" prohibiting union activity. Despite some workers losing their jobs as a result of these labour activities, the lasting effects of their work prevailed and can still be seen today. Furthermore, the labour movement in Toronto spread to other cities in North America and workers everywhere caught on to this effort in advancing their rights. Parades were held in celebration of the 1872 Toronto workers' movement and these celebrations eventually developed into what is today known as Labour Day.

Labour Day Illustration

In July of 1894, Prime Minister Sir John Thompson declared Labour Day a public holiday in Canada.

Further Reading: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/origins-of-labour-day-feature/>

## National Day of Mourning (Canadian Government)

In 2003, more than 900 people died in Canada as a result of work-related accidents or illnesses. This means that, on average, almost four workers are killed every working day. Close to 350,000 others were injured seriously to the extent that it prevented them from reporting to work for at least one day. It is estimated that nearly one million work-related injuries and illnesses are reported each year in Canada.

In 2003, workers in all age groups under 45 years were equally likely to be injured while on the job. Those over 45 had lower rates of work-related injuries and accidents. For the same year, the number of time-loss work-related injuries for men was also more than twice that for women.

Work-related accidents are very expensive. The total of compensation paid to work accident victims or their families and of other economic costs of work-related injuries each year is estimated to exceed $12 billion. These figures do not take into account the pain and suffering of the victims and their families, which are incalculable.

The Government of Canada is committed to promoting a healthy, safe, and productive work environment for all Canadians. The Labour Program of Human Resources and Skills Development are responsible for developing, administering, and enforcing legislation and regulations, including the Canada Labour Code. The Code applies to federally regulated workplaces, and one of its primary goals is to prevent accidents and injuries that could adversely affect employees’ health. The Health and Safety Officers of the Labour Program conduct workplace inspections and safety audits, respond to employee complaints, and investigate hazards. They also work with the policy and workplace health and safety committees to help resolve health and safety issues in the workplace. The National Day of Mourning is an annual day of remembrance for workers who have been killed or injured on the job in Canada. The aim of this day is to publicly renew the commitment to fight for the safety of the living, as well as mourn for those workers who have died.

On December 28th, 1990, the government passed the Workers Mourning Day Act, which established an official day observed every year to commemorate workers injured on the job, killed, disabled, or who suffer from occupational illnesses. This day is also intended to show Canadians’ concern for occupational health and safety. April 28 was chosen for this observance, since the first comprehensive Workers’ Compensation Act was passed in the province of Ontario. Although it all began in Canada, the Day of Mourning is now commemorated in more than 70 countries worldwide. Many schools use this day as an opportunity to do some labour education.

Further Reading: <https://www.ccohs.ca/events/mourning/>

## National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (Canadian Government)

On December 6th, 1989, an enraged gunman roamed the corridors of Montreal's École Polytechnique and sought out and murdered 14 women. The 25 year old gunman ordered the women to move to one side of the classroom and the men to leave, he shouted to the women. "You're all a bunch of feminists, and I hate feminists." He then opened fire. Six of the women in the room were shot dead. The gunman continued his rampage throughout the building, killing a total of 14 women in a violent act of misogyny[[41]](#footnote-41). He also injured 14 more people, mostly women, before using the gun to kill himself.

Almost immediately, the Montreal Massacre became a galvanizing moment in which mourning turned to outrage about all violence against women.

Of this day we remember the victims:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Michele Richard 21 | Helene Colgan 23 |
| Nathalie Croteau 23 | Maryse Leclair 23 |
| Sonia Pelletier 28 | Annie Turcotte 21 |
| Maryse Laganiere 25 | Barbara Daigneault 22 |
| Anne-Marie Lemay 22 | Anne-Marie Edward 21 |
| Maud Havieernick 29 | Annie St. Arneault 23 |
| Genevieve Bergeron 21 | Barbara Marie Klueznick 31 |

This annual remembrance remains important, yet decades later, gender-based violence continues to be a disturbing reality: violent crime rates have been decreasing overall, however, rates of rape and sexual assault have increased and rates of spousal violence against women have remained relatively unchanged in nearly all of the provinces over the last few years. Half of Canadian women will experience criminal violence by men in their homes, communities, workplaces and schools in their lifetime.

Women are especially vulnerable to acts of violence because of their continued lack of economic and political power, and many social and economic factors make it difficult for women to escape violence. Our society is still based on unequal wealth, unequal status, unequal opportunity and unequal power - eliminating inequality will help eliminate violence -December 6th is about remembrance and action, and there are many steps we can take that can make a difference.

In addition to raising awareness and speaking out against violence perpetuated against women, demanding programs, adequate financial resources and improved legislation from all levels of government can make a difference. A national affordable housing program, a rethinking of how to prosecute and punish those who commit violence against women and developing community-led solutions to ending violence against Aboriginal women in particular can all make a difference. A national public child care program, equal access to employment insurance, pay equity, and a living wage will enhance women's social, political and economic roles in our society and will decrease the risk of violence against them. We need to stop viewing violence against women as mere isolated cases, as something that happens to someone else, as being something private, and start recognizing that this issue affects all of us, men and women, as human beings and as citizens of Canada and the world. What can we do?

Listen to women. Learn from women. Learn about the problem. Learn why some men are violent. Challenge sexist language and jokes that degrade women. Learn to identify and oppose sexual harassment and violence in your community, school and family. Support local women's programs. Examine how your own behaviour might contribute to the problem. Work towards long-term solutions. Today, make a commitment for change. Together we can help end violence against women. Together we can help end gender-based violence!

Further Reading: <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/commemoration/vaw-vff/remembrance-commemoration-en.html>

## Queen Victoria Day (Canadian Government)

The Sovereign's birthday has been celebrated in Canada since the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901 - 64 years). May 24, Queen Victoria's birthday, was declared a holiday by the Legislature of the Province of Canada in 1845. Queen Elizabeth II, as of 2017, has been reigning for 65 years

After Confederation, the Queen's birthday was celebrated every year on May 24 unless that date was a Sunday, in which case a proclamation was issued providing for the celebration on May 25. After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, an Act was passed by the Parliament of Canada establishing a legal holiday on May 24 in each year (or May 25) under the name Victoria Day.

Further Reading: <http://www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/why-do-we-celebrate-victoria-day>

## Remembrance Day (Canadian Government)

Every November 11, we remember the courage of the brave Canadians who served our country and honour those who now protect it by celebrating Remembrance Day. It is important for students to be reminded of the contribution of Canadian men and women who died in past wars in the pursuit of peace. Those who are currently preserving peace in other parts of our world must also be recognized. It is equally important to remember the innocent civilians around the world who have become causalities of war.

Students in TDSB schools often recite the famous poem "In Flanders Fields" by Canadian John McCrae and wear poppies on Remembrance Day. Poppies have become emblems of this day because they grew throughout the fields of fallen soldiers during World War One. Today, people wear poppies to honour those who have sacrificed their lives for the freedom of others. Many schools hold assemblies, often to honour local veterans and hear their incredible stories from decades past. At the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, students of the TDSB pay their respects to the fallen in a minute of silence.

By remembering all who have served, we recognize the hardships and sacrifices they have made so that we can continue to live in peace.

November also marks Remembrance Day, and it is important to honour the sacrifices made by Aboriginal veterans, as well as the continuing contributions of the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who enlist. According to statistics from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, in the First World War alone, one in three Aboriginal men enlisted.

Further Reading: <http://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/remembrance/remembrance-day/>

## Thanksgiving Day (Canadian Government)

Many cultures and regions around the world have a time to celebrate the end of the growing season when all crops have been harvested. Historical texts have shown that ancient civilizations celebrated at harvest time and thanked their gods and goddesses. Today, cultures throughout the world that experience a change of seasons from sowing to reaping still celebrate this time.

Thanksgiving is a day when people get together with their families to express gratitude for all the good things that have happened during the year: for health, family, friends, and, of course, food of the harvest.

We often think of European settlers as having started the celebration in North America. However, harvest feasts were held long before that. Original peoples throughout the continent harvested and preserved food to be stored for the long winter ahead and gave thanks.

Regardless of the country or culture, the story is similar. Peoples throughout the world gave thanks for a successful harvest. As many other people have immigrated to Canada and the United States, they have also brought different customs of giving thanks.

Further Reading: <http://www.ibtimes.com/canadian-thanksgiving-2014-3-ways-holiday-differs-americas-turkey-day-1703250>

## Rwanda Genocide Memorial Day (Canadian Government)

The Rwandan genocide[[42]](#footnote-42), was a [genocidal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide) [mass slaughter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_murder) of [Tutsi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tutsi) in [Rwanda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwanda) by members of the [Hutu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu) majority government. An estimated 500,000–1,000,000 Rwandans were killed during the 100-day period from April 7 to mid-July 1994, constituting as many as 70% of the Tutsi and 20% of Rwanda's total population. The genocide and widespread slaughter of Rwandans ended when the Tutsi-backed and heavily armed [Rwandan Patriotic Front](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Patriotic_Front) (RPF) led by [Paul Kagame](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kagame) took control of the country. An estimated 2,000,000 Rwandans, mostly Hutus, were displaced and became refugees.

The genocide was planned by members of the core political elite, many of whom occupied positions at top levels of the national government. Perpetrators came from the ranks of the Rwandan army, the Gendarmerie, government-backed militias including the [*Interahamwe*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interahamwe)and [*Impuzamugambi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impuzamugambi), as well as [Catholic[[43]](#footnote-43) clergy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clergy) and countless ordinary civilians. Some militias called themselves the "Army of Jesus" and they believed their mission was to destroy God's enemies. The genocide took place in the context of the [Rwandan Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Civil_War), an ongoing conflict beginning in 1990 between the Hutu-led government and the [Rwandan Patriotic Front](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Patriotic_Front) (RPF), which largely consisted of Tutsi refugees whose families had fled to Uganda after the 1959 Hutu revolt against colonial rule. Waves of Hutu violence against the RPF and Tutsi followed Rwandan independence in 1962. International pressure on the Hutu government of [Juvénal Habyarimana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juv%C3%A9nal_Habyarimana) resulted in a ceasefire in 1993, with a road-map to implement the [Arusha Accords](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arusha_Accords), which would create a power-sharing government with the RPF. This agreement was not acceptable to a number of conservative Hutu, including members of the Akazu, who viewed it as conceding to enemy demands. The RPF military campaign intensified support for the so-called "[Hutu Power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu_Power)" ideology, which portrayed the RPF as an alien force who were non-Christian, intent on reinstating the [Tutsi monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Rwanda) and enslaving Hutus. Many Hutus reacted to this prospect with extreme opposition. In the lead-up to the genocide the number of machetes imported into Rwanda increased.

On April 6, 1994, an airplane carrying Habyarimana and Burundian president [Cyprien Ntaryamira](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyprien_Ntaryamira) was [shot down](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_Juv%C3%A9nal_Habyarimana_and_Cyprien_Ntaryamira) on its descent into [Kigali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kigali). The assassination of Habyarimana ended the peace accords.

Genocidal killings began the following day. Soldiers, police, and militia quickly executed key Tutsi and moderate Hutu military and political leaders who could have assumed control in the ensuing [power vacuum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_vacuum). Checkpoints and barricades were erected to screen all holders of the national [ID card of Rwanda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_Rwanda#Ethnic_identity_cards_in_contemporary_Rwanda) (which contained ethnic classification information introduced by the [Belgian colonial government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgian_colonial_empire) in 1933) in order to systematically identify and kill Tutsi. These forces recruited and pressured Hutu civilians to arm themselves with machetes, clubs, blunt objects, and other weapons to kill their Tutsi neighbors and to destroy or steal their property.

The breakdown of the peace accords led the RPF to restart its offensive and rapidly seize control of the northern part of the country before capturing Kigali in mid-July, bringing an end to the genocide. During these events and in the aftermath, the United Nations (UN) and countries including the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), and [Belgium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgium) were criticized for their inaction and failure to strengthen the force and mandate of the [UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Assistance_Mission_for_Rwanda) (UNAMIR) peacekeepers. Other observers criticized the government of [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) for alleged support of the Hutu government after the genocide had begun.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_genocide>

# CHINESE NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

## Chinese Moon Festival

The Chinese Moon Festival a.k.a. Mid-Autumn Festival is an inherited custom of moon sacrificial ceremonies. The ancient Chinese observed that the movement of the moon had a close relationship with changes of the seasons and agricultural production. Hence, to express their thanks to the moon and celebrate the harvest, they offered a sacrifice to the moon on autumn days.

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| --- |
| Mid-Autumn Festival in Xian |
| Mid-Autumn Festival in Xian |

This custom could be traced back to the [Zhou Dynasty](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/history/zhou/) (1046 - 256 BC) and was more often practiced by the royal class on the Autumnal Equinox. At that time, the custom had no festival background at all. Later in the [Sui](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/history/sui/) (581 - 618 AD) and [Tang](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/history/tang/) (618 - 907 AD) dynasties, social prosperity inspired the custom of appreciating the moon on the moon sacrifice ceremony day among common people and the two merged. The people expressed their faith more liberally than the royal class and so they did not strictly hold their activities on the Autumnal Equinox. So the 15th of the 8th lunar month, the closest full moon day to the Autumnal Equinox, turned out to be a better choice and was set as a fixed festival. This happened in the Tang Dynasty. By the time of the [Northern Song Dynasty](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/history/song.htm) (960 - 1127 AD), Mid-Autumn Festival had already become a widely celebrated folk festival.

Futher Reading: <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/essential/holidays/mid-autumn.htm>

## Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year celebrations, also known as the Spring Festival, in China start on the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month of the Chinese calendar. The festival lasts for about 23 days, ending on the 15th day of the first lunar month in the following year in the Chinese calendar.

What do people do?

Many people clean their homes to welcome the Spring Festival. They put up the red posters with poetic verses on it to their doors, Chinese New Year pictures on their walls, and decorate their homes with red lanterns. It is also a time to reunite with relatives so many people visit their families at this time of the year.

In the evening of the Spring Festival Eve, many people set off fireworks and firecrackers, hoping to cast away any bad luck and bring forth good luck. Children often receive “luck” money. Many people wear new clothes and send Chinese New Year greetings to each other. Various activities such as beating drums and striking gongs, as well as dragon and lion dances, are all part of the Spring Festival festivities.

# CHRISTIANITY

## Advent (Christianity)

Advent is a [season](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgical_year) observed in many Western [Christian churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the [Nativity[[44]](#footnote-44) of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nativity_of_Jesus) Christ at [Christmas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas). The term is a version of the Latin word meaning "coming". Latin *adventus* is the translation of the Greek word [*parousia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parousia), commonly used to refer to the [Second Coming of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming). For some Christians, the season of Advent anticipates the coming of Christ from two different perspectives. The season offers the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah, and to be alert for his Second Coming.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advent>

## All Saints Day (Eastern Orthodox/Roman Catholic)

Many Christians in Canada honor all the different saints[[45]](#footnote-45), particularly those who do not have their own feast day, on All Saints' Day on November 1 each year. Some eastern churches in Canada celebrate this day on the first Sunday after Pentecost. It is also known as All Hallows Tide, All-Hallomas, or All Hallows' Day.

Some churches in Canada have special All Saints' Day masses where people can engage in prayer and the singing of hymns.

**What Do People Do?**

People of different church denominations, especially the Catholic Church, observe All Saints' Day throughout Canada. For those who observe All Saints' Day, this event gives people a moment of reflection on the lives of saints, as well as a chance to pray for friends or family members who are deceased.

Some Canadians feel that All Saints' Day is an underrated event that is not observed by many people because it falls on the day after [Halloween](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/canada/halloween). Those who do observe All Saints' Day try to keep traditions alive by attending church services that focus on the day. Some churches hold special All Saints' Day masses with choirs, organ music and incense and hymns to celebrate.

Further Reading: <http://www.religionfacts.com/all-saints-day>

## Annunciation (Eastern Orthodox and Western)

The Annunciation the [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) celebration of the announcement by the Angel [Gabriel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel) to the [Virgin Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary,_mother_of_Jesus) that she would [conceive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fertilisation) and become the mother of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), the [Son of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_God), marking his [Incarnation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarnation_(Christianity)).

## Ascension Day (Eastern Orthodox)

This observance falls on the 40th day after the Resurrection of Christ.

The Ascension of Jesus(Anglicized from the [Vulgate](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgate)[[46]](#footnote-46) Latin [Acts 1:9-11](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/Acts#1:9) section title: *Ascensio Iesu*) is the Christian teaching found in the [New Testament](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) that the [resurrected Jesus](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_Jesus) was [taken up to Heaven](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entering_heaven_alive) in his resurrected body, in the presence of eleven of his [apostles](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostles), occurring 40 days after the resurrection.

***9*** *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

***10*** *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;*

***11*** *which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

Source: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1>

In the biblical narrative, an [angel](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel) tells the watching [disciples](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disciple_(Christianity)) that [Jesus' second coming](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming_of_Jesus) will take place in the same manner as his ascension. The [canonical[[47]](#footnote-47) gospels](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical_gospel) include two brief descriptions of the ascension of Jesus in [Luke 24:50-53](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/Luke#24:50) and [Mark 16:19](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/Mark#16:19). A more detailed account of Jesus' bodily Ascension into the clouds is then given in the [Acts of the Apostles](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles) ([1:9-11](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/Acts#1:9)).

The ascension of Jesus is professed in the [Nicene Creed](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed) and in the [Apostles' Creed](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostles%27_Creed). The ascension implies Jesus' humanity being taken into [Heaven](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven_(Christianity)). The [Feast of the Ascension](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feast_of_the_Ascension), celebrated on the 40th day of [Easter](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter) (always a Thursday), is one of the chief feasts of the Christian year. The feast dates back at least to the later 4th century, as is widely attested. The ascension is one of the five major milestones in the gospel narrative of the life of [Jesus](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), the others being [baptism](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_Jesus), [transfiguration](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfiguration_of_Jesus), [crucifixion](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus), and [resurrection](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_Jesus).

By the 6th century the iconography[[48]](#footnote-48) of the [ascension in Christian art](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Jesus_in_Christian_art) had been established and by the 9th century ascension scenes were being depicted on domes of churches. Many ascension scenes have two parts, an upper (Heavenly) part and a lower (earthly) part. The ascending Jesus is often shown blessing with his right hand – directed towards the earthly group below him and signifying that he is blessing the entire Church.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Jesus>

## Ash Wednesday (Christianity Roman Catholic)

Ash Wednesday is one of the most popular and important holy days in the liturgical calendar. Ash Wednesday opens Lent, a season of fasting and prayer. Ash Wednesday takes place 46 days before Easter Sunday, and is chiefly observed by Catholics, although many other Christians observe it too. Ash Wednesday comes from the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting. The practice includes the wearing of ashes on the forehead. The ashes symbolize the dust from which God made us. As the priest applies the ashes to a person's forehead, he speaks the words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Further Reading: <http://www.catholic.org/clife/lent/ashwed.php>

## Beheading of St. John the Baptist (Christianity and Eastern Orthodox)

The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, also known as the Decollation of Saint John the Baptist or the Beheading of the Forerunner, is a [holy day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_day) observed by various [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian) churches that follow [liturgical traditions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_liturgy). The day commemorates the [martyrdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyrdom) by [beheading](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beheading) of [Saint John the Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_John_the_Baptist)[[49]](#footnote-49) on the orders of [Herod Antipas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Antipas), through the vengeful request of his step-daughter [Salome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salome) and her mother.

According to the [Synoptic[[50]](#footnote-50) Gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_Gospels), Herod, who was [tetrarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tetrarchy_(Judea)), or sub-king, of [Galilee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galilee) under the Roman Empire, had imprisoned John the Baptist because he reproved Herod for divorcing his wife (Phasaelis) and unlawfully taking [Herodias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodias), the wife of his brother [Herod Philip I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Philip_I). On Herod's birthday, Herodias's daughter (Salome) danced before the king and his guests. Her dancing pleased Herod so much that, in his drunkenness, he promised to give her anything she desired, up to half of his kingdom. When the daughter asked her mother what she should request, she was told to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Although Herod was appalled by the request, he reluctantly agreed and had John executed.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beheading_of_St._John_the_Baptist>

Further Reading: <http://www.goarch.org/special/beheading_saint_john_the_baptist/index_html>

## Baptism of Jesus (Christianity)

The baptism[[51]](#footnote-51) of Jesus marks the beginning of his [public ministry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Jesus). This event is described in the [gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel) of [Matthew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew), [Mark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mark) and [Luke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke). [John's gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John) does not directly describe Jesus' baptism.

Most modern theologians view the baptism of Jesus by [John the Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Baptist) as a historical event to which a high degree of certainty can be assigned if religious texts are taken at face value. Along with the [crucifixion of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus), most biblical scholars view it as one of the two historically certain [facts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fact) about him, and often use it as the starting point for the study of the [historical Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Jesus).

The baptism is one of the five major milestones in the gospel narrative of the life of Jesus, the others being the[Transfiguration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfiguration_of_Jesus)[[52]](#footnote-52), [Crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus), [Resurrection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_Jesus)[[53]](#footnote-53), and [Ascension](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Jesus)[[54]](#footnote-54). Most [Christian denominations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_denominations) view the baptism of Jesus as an important event and a basis for the Christian rite of [baptism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism) (see also [Acts 19:1-7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+19%3A1-7&version=ESV)). In [Eastern Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Christianity), Jesus' baptism is commemorated on 19 January (in the Gregorian calendar, 6 January in the Julian calendar), the feast of [Epiphany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_(Christian)#Eastern_Christian_Churches). In the [Roman Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church), the [Anglican Communion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Communion), the [Lutheran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran) Churches and some other [Western denominations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Christianity), it is recalled on a day within the following week, the feast of the [baptism of the Lord](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_the_Lord). In Roman Catholicism, the baptism of Jesus is one of the “[Luminous Mysteries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosary#Luminous_Mysteries)” sometimes added to the [Rosary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosary). It is a [Trinitarian[[55]](#footnote-55) feast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Feasts_of_the_Orthodox_Church) in Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Further Reading: <http://www.theopedia.com/baptism-of-jesus>

## The Birth of Jesus Foretold

According to the Christian Bible’s Book of Luke, Chapter one, Verses 26-38…

*…God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”*

*Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid,Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”*

*“How will this be”, Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”*

*The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”*

*“I am the Lord’s servant”, Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”*

*Then the angel left her.*

Mention of this is also noted in the in the [Qur'an](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qur%27an), in Sura [003:045](https://quran.com/003:045) ([Al-i-Imran – The Family of Imran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Imran)) verses 45–51 ([Yusuf Ali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdullah_Yusuf_Ali) translation)

*Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah”*

Muslim tradition holds that the Annunciation took place during the month of [Ramadan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramadan_(calendar_month)).

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annunciation#In_the_Quran>

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annunciation>

Further Reading: [https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/lebanon/**annunciation**](https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/lebanon/annunciation)

## Christmas – Birth of Christ

December 25th is Christmas for most Christians in the West, who follow the Gregorian calendar. Some Eastern Orthodox churches follow the Julian calendar and celebrate Christmas usually one to two weeks after the date on the Gregorian calendar.

For Christians, Christmas is a joyous religious celebration of the birth of Jesus. Most Christians recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the Son of God, and accept him as their Saviour and Lord. Christmas has a long tradition of gift giving, which originates with the New Testament account of the Three Wise Men bearing gifts to the newborn baby Jesus.

Christmas has also become a secular holiday enjoyed by many non-Christians. Many celebrate Christmas by exchanging gifts, singing, visiting with family and friends.

Christmas absorbed the festive atmosphere and many of the traditions of the Roman Saturnalia and other festivals it replaced. The tradition of Santa Claus is based on a real person—a bishop named Nicholas who gave gifts to children and to people living in poverty. St. Nicholas’ feast day is December 6th, which is why it has become, for many, associated with Christmas.

Adapted from Alma Flor Ada, Violet J. Harris, and Lee Bennett Hopkins,

A Chorus of Cultures: Developing Literacy Through Multicultural Poetry. Carmel, CA: Hampton-Brown Books, 1993

## Clean Monday (Eastern Orthodox)

Clean Monday also known as Pure Monday, Ash Monday, Monday of Lent or Green Monday, is the first day of Great Lent in the Eastern Orthodox Christian, Saint Thomas Christians of India and Eastern Catholic churches and refers to the leaving behind of sinful attitudes and non-fasting foods.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clean_Monday>

## Coptic New Year (Eastern Orthodox)

The word "Copt" comes from *Hikaptah,* an early name for the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis. Christians in Egypt belong to the Coptic Church, which traces its legendary origins to the first century and St. Mark[[56]](#footnote-56). When it comes to determining the dates for certain holidays, Coptic Christians follow the old Julian calendar, which was originally devised by the ancient Egyptians and is divided into twelve thirty-day months. The five extra days (six in a Leap Year) form a thirteenth month. This means that a Julian year is 365.25 days long - slightly longer than a solar year, which is only 365.242199 days long. Over the centuries this seemingly minor discrepancy has accumulated, and the Julian calendar is now seven years and eight months behind the Western or Gregorian calendar, which was adopted in 1582. As a result, New Year's Day in the Coptic Church falls on September 11 (September 12 in a Leap Year), at a time when Christians elsewhere are just beginning to anticipate the year's end.

The Coptic New Year is observed by Coptic Christians in both Egypt and Ethiopia, as well as by Egyptian communities elsewhere in the world. It honors the martyrs of Coptic New Year.

Further Reading: <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Coptic+New+Year>

## Easter (Christianity)

Easter Sunday celebrates Jesus’ Resurrection after his death caused by crucifixion on Good Friday. Easter Monday is celebrated as a holiday by some Christian cultures.

Easter is considered to be one of the oldest and most important festivals in the Christian year, as the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus is meant to renew a Christian’s commitment to living a life of truth, justice, and love.

Many Christians mark Easter by attending church services over the weekend, and for some, this includes a midnight mass and candlelight vigil on Saturday. Families often gather together for dinner on Sunday to celebrate the Resurrection.

The symbols that are associated with the holiday in North America are taken from ancient roots. In fact, the word “Easter” derives from the Anglo-Saxon spring goddess known as “Eostre.” The custom of dyeing eggs, a symbol of new life, goes back to the ancient Egyptians, Persians, and Romans. These popular symbols, however, are by no means common to all Christian peoples. In addition, many of these customs and symbols have counterparts in non-Christian celebrations of spring.

In the past, the Easter festivities involved a week of secular celebration after the religious observances, but this was reduced to one day in the nineteenth-century. Events include egg-rolling competitions and, in some predominantly Catholic countries, dousing other people with water, which at one time had been holy water (water blessed[[57]](#footnote-57) by a priest), blessed the day before at Easter Sunday Mass and carried home to bless the house and food. In the Catholic Byzantine Rite and the Eastern Orthodox Church, Easter Monday is called Bright Monday.

During the Lenten[[58]](#footnote-58) period, many Christian’s give up something, or fast, in honour of Jesus’ gift of giving his life for them.

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Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

## Easter - Pascha - (Eastern Orthodox)

Pascha, also called Easter, is the feast of the [Resurrection](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Resurrection) of the [Lord](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Jesus_Christ). *Pascha* is a transliteration of the Greek word, which is itself a transliteration of the Hebrew *pesach* Aramaic *pascha*, both words translated from the Hebrew *pesach* meaning passover.

Pascha normally falls either one or five weeks later than the feast as observed by Christians who follow the [Gregorian calendar](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Gregorian_calendar). However, occasionally the two observances coincide, and on occasion they can be four weeks apart. The reason for the difference is that, though the two calendars use the same underlying formula to determine the festival, they compute from different starting points. The older [Julian calendar](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Julian_calendar)'s solar calendar is 13 days behind the Gregorian's and its lunar calendar is four to five days behind.

Further Reading: <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Pascha>

## Elevation of the Cross (Eastern Orthodox)

The Elevation of the Holy Cross is one of the [Great Feasts](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Great_Feasts) of the [Orthodox Church](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodox_Church). This feast is also referred to as the Exaltation of the Cross. This is also a popular name day for Stavroula/Stavros (from "stavros" meaning cross).

Empress [Helen](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Helen) (the mother of St. [Constantine the Great](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Constantine_the_Great)) found the cross on [Golgotha](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Golgotha)[[61]](#footnote-61) in 326 AD, the place where [Christ](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Jesus_Christ) was crucified. On the spot where the Cross was discovered, St. Helen had found a hitherto unknown flower of rare beauty and fragrance, which has been named "Vasiliko," or [Basil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_basil_cultivars), meaning the flower of royalty. Note that the word "Vasiliko" means "of the King," since the word "Basileus" in Greek means "King"; so, the plant Vasiliko, Basil, is tied to the Precious Cross of the King of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Orthodox Cross set for special veneration on the feast of The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life Giving Cross.

Underneath the Basil, the Cross of Christ was found, but with it were the other two crosses, those used to crucify the two thieves on either side of Christ. The sign with the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews", also lay among the three crosses. In order to determine which one was the true cross, a sick woman was told to kiss each of the three crosses. The woman kissed the first cross with no result. She kissed the second cross and again nothing happened. However, when the ailing woman kissed the “True Cross”, she was immediately made well. It so happened that a funeral procession was passing that way, and so the body of the dead man was placed on each of the crosses, and when it was placed on the True Cross, the dead man came to life — thus the name the “Life-Giving” Cross, which gives life not only to that man, but to each person who believes in the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and His all-glorious three day Resurrection. When the true Cross was identified, it was lifted on high for all the people to see, who then continually sang *Kyrie Eleison[[62]](#footnote-62)*, a practice which is still enacted at current celebrations of this [feast](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Feast).

Further Reading: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/**Elevation**\_of\_the\_Holy\_**Cross**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elevation_of_the_Holy_Cross)

## Feast of the Dormition (Eastern Orthodox)

The Dormition[[63]](#footnote-63) of the Mother of God often anglicized as *Kimisis*, is a [Great Feast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Feasts_of_the_Orthodox_Church) of the [Eastern Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church), [Oriental Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental_Orthodox_Churches) and [Eastern Catholic Churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Catholic_Churches) which commemorates the "falling asleep" or death of [Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary,_the_mother_of_Jesus) the [*Theotokos*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theotokos) ("[Mother of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_of_God)", literally translated as *God-bearer*), and her bodily resurrection before being taken up into heaven. It is celebrated on August 15 as the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. The [Armenian Apostolic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Apostolic_Church) celebrates the Dormition not on a fixed date, but on the Sunday nearest August 15.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dormition_of_the_Mother_of_God>

## Feast of the Epiphany[[64]](#footnote-64)/[[65]](#footnote-65) - Dia de los Reyes (Christianity)



Some Christians from Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico do not celebrate their Christmas on the 25th of December. The distribution of gifts, etc., takes place on the 6th of January to coincide with the arrival of the three kings bearing gifts for the birth of Jesus. The date itself is alternatively known as 3 Kings Day and is the date that these Christians remember how the wise men brought their gifts of gold, frankincense[[66]](#footnote-66) and myrrh[[67]](#footnote-67) to Jesus. This is the last day of the 12 days of Christmas.

The Epiphany - Adoration of the Magi by El Greco, 1568, Museo Soumaya, Mexico City

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_(holiday)>

## Feast of the Nativity - Christmas - (Orthodox)

Some Eastern Orthodox churches follow the Julian calendar and celebrate Christmas on January 7. For Christians, Christmas is a joyous religious celebration of the birth of Jesus. Most Christians recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the Son of God, and accept him as their Saviour and Lord. Christmas has a long tradition of gift giving which originates with the New Testament account of the Three Wise Men bearing gifts to the newborn baby. Many Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas with great feasts with families and friends and attending services in church.

Further Reading: <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Nativity>

## Feast of the Wedding of Cana in Galilee (Ethiopian Orthodox)

The feast of the Wedding of Cana of Galilee is celebrated on the 13th day of the month of Tobe[[68]](#footnote-68), and it is one of the Seven Minor Feasts of our Lord. At this wedding, water was transformed into unsweetened wine. This was the first miracle[[69]](#footnote-69) of our Lord Christ in His great ministry, as stated in the gospel of St. John: “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him” (Jn. 2:11). Through this miracle, the divinity of the Lord Christ was revealed in His ability to transform substance. The Church considers this miracle as a fore coming sign of the offering in the sacrament, through which bread and wine are transformed to the Body and Blood of the Lord of Glory. This miracle also reveals Christ’s acceptance of St. Mary’s intercession on the behalf of the human race. For Christ Himself proclaimed to her saying: “My hour has not yet come.” However, because of her plead, He immediately answered and performed the miracle. As for Christ’s presence at the wedding, it is a sign of Christ’s sanctification of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, and for this reason the Church refers to this miracle regularly in the Rite of Holy Matrimony. In addition, the church has assigned the passage of the Gospel of St. Matthew 19: 1-19 to be read in the Gospel of the Vespers Prayers of the Feast of the Wedding of Cana of Galilee. Accordingly, this is the same passage that is read in the Rite of Holy Matrimony.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_at_Cana>

## Feast of St. Mark (Egyptian Orthodox)

In AD 49, about 19 years after the [Ascension of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Jesus), Mark traveled to [Alexandria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandria) [cf. Acts 15:36–41] and founded the Church of Alexandria – today, both the [Coptic Orthodox Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_Orthodox_Church) and the [Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Orthodox_Church_of_Alexandria) claim to be successors to this original community. Aspects of the Coptic liturgy can be traced back to Mark himself. He became the first [bishop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop) of Alexandria and he is honored as the founder of Christianity in [Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa).

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feast_of_Saint_Mark>

## Founding of the True Cross (Ethiopian Orthodox)

The True Crossis the name for physical remnants which, by a [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) tradition, are believed to be from the cross upon which [Jesus was crucified](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus) (compare ***Elevation of the Cross***, above). According to post-[Nicene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_seven_Ecumenical_Councils) historians such as [Socrates Scholasticus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socrates_Scholasticus), the Empress [Helena](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena_(empress)), mother of [Constantine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_Constantine), the first [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I_and_Christianity) [Emperor of Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_of_Rome), travelled to the [Holy Land](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Land) in 326–28, founding churches and establishing relief agencies for the poor. Historians [Gelasius of Caesarea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelasius_of_Caesarea) and [Rufinus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrannius_Rufinus) claimed that she discovered the hiding place of three crosses that were believed to be used at the crucifixion of Jesus and of two thieves, [St. Dismas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penitent_thief) and [Gestas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impenitent_thief), executed with him, and that a [miracle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miracle) revealed which of the three was the True Cross.

Further Reading: <http://www.nationwidetourethiopia.com/religiousfestivals/002.html>

## Holy Cross Day (Greek Orthodox)

The Sunday of the Holy Cross is the Third Sunday of [Great Lent](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Great_Lent), also called Sunday of the [Veneration](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Veneration) of the [Cross](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Cross). On this Sunday, services include a special veneration of the Cross, which prepares the faithful for the commemoration of the Crucifixion during Holy Week and the Holy Resurrection.

Further Reading: <http://www.greekboston.com/religion/elevation-holy-cross/>

## Holy Friday (Eastern Orthodox)

On Great and Holy Friday the Orthodox Church commemorates the death of Christ on the Cross. This is the culmination of the observance of His Passion[[70]](#footnote-70) by which our Lord suffered and died for our sins. This commemoration begins on Thursday evening with the Matins[[71]](#footnote-71) of Holy Friday and concludes with a Vespers[[72]](#footnote-72) on Friday afternoon that observes the unfailing of Christ from the Cross and the placement of His body in the tomb.

The commemoration acknowledges the sufferings of Christ: the mockery, the crown of thorns, the scourging, the nails, the thirst, the vinegar and gall, the cry of desolation, and all the Savior endured on the Cross.

Further Reading: <http://lent.goarch.org/holy_friday/learn/>

## Laudation of the Mother of God (Russian Orthodox)

According to the [New Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament), Mary, also known as the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady (the Madonna), and occasionally Saint Mary (amongst [other titles, styles and honorifics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titles_of_Mary)), was a [Galilean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galilean) [Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish) woman of [Nazareth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazareth) and the mother of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus).

The [gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical_gospels) of [Matthew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew) and [Luke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke) in the New Testament describe Mary as a [virgin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginity) and Christians believe that she [conceived her son while a virgin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virgin_birth_of_Jesus) by the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_(Christianity)). This took place when she was already [betrothed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betrothal) to [Joseph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Joseph) and was awaiting the concluding rite of marriage, the formal home-taking ceremony. She married Joseph and accompanied him to [Bethlehem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethlehem), where Jesus was born. According to ancient Jewish custom, Mary could have been betrothed at about 12 years of age, however, there is no direct evidence of Mary's age at betrothal or in pregnancy. The term "betrothal" is an awkward translation of *kiddushin*; according to the Jewish law those called "betrothed" were actually husband and wife.

Further Reading: <http://russianorthodoxchurch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ENGLISH-SCHEDULE-FEB-APRIL-2017.pdf>

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_(Mother_of_Jesus)>

## Meeting of Our Lord (Russian Orthodox)

The Meeting of the Lord in the Temple (also called the Presentation) is one of the [Great Feasts](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Great_Feasts) of the [Orthodox Church](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodox_Church), celebrated on [February 2](https://orthodoxwiki.org/February_2) and February 15 (according to [Old Calendarists](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Old_Calendarists)), using the [Gregorian Calendar](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Gregorian_Calendar), [Julian Calendar](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Julian_Calendar), and [Revised Julian Calendar](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Revised_Julian_Calendar). This feast is also known as Candlemas, particularly in Western nations, due to the custom of blessing [candles](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Candle) on this day.

In Eastern tradition, it is often called The Meeting of Our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ, because the hymns emphasize the incarnate[[73]](#footnote-73) God, the [Lord](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Lord) [Jesus Christ](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Jesus_Christ), meeting with his people, Israel, in the persons of the [Prophet](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Prophet) [Simeon](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Simeon_the_God-receiver) and the Prophetess [Anna](https://orthodoxwiki.org/index.php?title=Anna_the_Prophetess&action=edit&redlink=1).

Further Reading: <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Meeting_of_the_Lord>

## New Year (Eastern Orthodox)

Many Orthodox Christians who observe the New Year’s Day date from the Julian calendar may spend the day reflecting on the previous year and think about meaningful resolutions for the New Year. Many people celebrate the day with family or friends to welcome the New Year. Activities may include fireworks, large meals and music entertainment.

Some churches hold Orthodox New Year events such as parties or dinners. Those who attend these events may pray for the New Year and toast their drinks. Some churches host gala dinners to raise funds for charitable causes or church building restorations.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_New_Year>

## Presentation of the Virgin Mary (Roman Catholic and Christian Orthodox)

The account of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple is principally based on the [Proto evangelium (earliest form of the evangelism) of James](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protoevangelium_of_James), which has been dated by historians prior to the year 200 AD. The story relates that in thanksgiving for the birth of their daughter, Mary, Joachim and [Anne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Anne) decide to consecrate[[74]](#footnote-74) her to God, and bring her, at the age of three years, to the temple in Jerusalem. Mary’s presentation in the temple draws parallels to that of the [prophet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophet) [Samuel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel), whose mother [Hannah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah_(Bible)), like Anne was also thought to be barren, and who offered her child as a gift to God at [Shiloh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shilo,_Mateh_Binyamin).

Mary remained in the Temple until her twelfth year, at which point she was assigned to [Joseph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Joseph) as guardian. According to [Coptic tradition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copts), her father Joachim died when Mary was six years old and her mother when Mary was eight. While the story is a legend with no foundation in history, the point is to show that even in her childhood Mary was completely dedicated to God. It is from this account that arose the feast of Mary's Presentation.

Further Reading: <https://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/PRESENT.HTM>

## St. Clements of Ohrid Patrons Day (Macedonian Orthodox)

St. Clements was a medieval [Bulgarian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgarian_Empire) saint, scholar, writer and enlightener of the [Slavs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavs). He was one of the most prominent disciples of [Saints Cyril and Methodius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saints_Cyril_and_Methodius) and is often associated with the creation of the [Glagolitic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glagolitic) and [Cyrillic scripts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrillic_script), especially their popularisation among [Christianised](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianise) Slavs. He was the founder of the [Ohrid Literary School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohrid_Literary_School) and is regarded as a patron of education and language by some Slavic people. He is regarded to be the first bishop of the [Bulgarian Orthodox Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgarian_Orthodox_Church), one of the seven [Apostles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostles) of the [Bulgarian Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgarian_Empire) ([Bulgaria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgaria)), the patron saint of the [Republic of Macedonia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Macedonia), the city of [Ohrid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohrid) and the [Macedonian Orthodox Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonian_Orthodox_Church).

Further Reading: <https://anydayguide.com/calendar/2730>

## St. Sava Devine Day (Serbian Orthodox)

**T**he son of Stefan Nemanja, the great Serbian national leader, born in 1169. As a young man he yearned for the spiritual life, which led him to flee to the Holy Mountain, where he became a monk and with rare zeal followed all the ascetic practices. Nemanja followed his son's example and himself went to the Holy Mountain, where he lived and ended his days as the monk Simeon.

Sava obtained the independence of the Serbian Church from the Emperor and the Patriarch[[75]](#footnote-75), and became its first archbishop. He, together with his father, built the monastery of Hilandar and after that many other monasteries, churches and schools throughout the land of Serbia. He traveled to the Holy Land on two occasions, on pilgrimage to the holy places there. He made peace among his brothers, who were in conflict over their rights, and also between the Serbs and their neighbors. In creating the Serbian Church, he created the Serbian state and Serbian culture along with it. He brought peace to all the Balkan peoples, working for the good of all, for which he was venerated and loved by all on the Balkan peninsula. He gave a Christian soul to the people of Serbia, which survived the fall of the Serbian state.

Monastery of Hilandar (Erected 1198)

He died in Trinova in the reign of King Asen, being taken ill after the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Theophany in 1236. King Vladislav took his body to Mileseva, whence Sinan Pasha removed it, burning it at Vracar in Belgrade on April 27th, 1594.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Sava>

## Transfiguration of Christ (Eastern Orthodox)

The Transfiguration of Jesus is an episode in the [New Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) in which [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus) is [transfigured](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfiguration_(religion)) (or [metamorphosed](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/metamorphose)) and becomes radiant in [glory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glory_(religion)) upon a mountain. The [Synoptic Gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_Gospels) ([Matthew 17:1–9](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Matthew&verse=17:1%E2%80%939&src=!), [Mark 9:2–8](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Mark&verse=9:2%E2%80%938&src=!), [Luke 9:28–36](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Luke&verse=9:28%E2%80%9336&src=!)) describe it, and [2 Peter 1:16–18](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=2%20Peter&verse=1:16%E2%80%9318&src=!) refers to it. It has also been hypothesized that the [Gospel of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John) alludes to it in [John 1:14](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/John#1:14). [Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter), [James](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_James_(disambiguation)), [John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Apostle), [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), [Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses), and [Elijah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah) were on the mount of transfiguration.

The Transfiguration is one of the M[iracles of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miracles_of_Jesus) according to the Gospels. This miracle is unique among others that appear in the [Canonical gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical_gospels), in that the miracle happens to Jesus himself. [Thomas Aquinas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aquinas) considered the Transfiguration "the greatest miracle" in that it complemented baptism and showed the [perfection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfection_of_Christ) of life in [Heaven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven). The Transfiguration is one of the five major milestones in the gospel narrative of the life of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), the others being [Baptism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_Jesus), [Crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus), [Resurrection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_Jesus), and [Ascension](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Jesus). In 2002, [Pope John Paul II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II) introduced the [Luminous Mysteries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luminous_Mysteries) in the [Rosary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosary), which includes the Transfiguration.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfiguration_of_Jesus>

## Twelfth Night (Christianity)

Twelfth Nightis a festival in some branches of [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) marking the coming of the [Epiphany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_(Christian))[[76]](#footnote-76). Different traditions mark the date of Twelfth Night on either 5 January or 6 January; the [Church of England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_England), Mother Church of the [Anglican Communion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Communion), celebrates Twelfth Night on the 5th and "refers to the night before Epiphany, the day when the nativity story tells us that the wise men visited the infant Jesus". In Western Church traditions, the Twelfth Night concludes the [Twelve Days of Christmas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Days_of_Christmas); although, in others, the Twelfth Night can precede the Twelfth Day.

[Bruce Forbes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Forbes) wrote: "In 567 the Council of Tours[[77]](#footnote-77) proclaimed that the entire period between Christmas and Epiphany should be considered part of the celebration, creating what became known as the twelve days of Christmas, or what the English called Christmastide. On the last of the twelve days, called Twelfth Night, various cultures developed a wide range of additional special festivities. The variation extends even to the issue of how to count the days. If Christmas Day is the first of the twelve days, then Twelfth Night would be on January 5, the eve of the Epiphany. If December 26, the day after Christmas, is the first day, then Twelfth Night falls on January 6, the evening of the Epiphany itself."

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_Night_(holiday)>

# CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY

## L. Ron Hubbard’s Birthday (Church of Scientology)

Developed by L. Ron Hubbard (13 March 1911 - ), Scientology is a religion that offers a precise path leading to a complete and certain understanding of one’s true spiritual nature and one’s relationship to self, family, groups, Mankind, all life forms, the material universe, the spiritual universe and the [Supreme Being](http://www.scientology.ca/faq/scientology-beliefs/what-is-the-concept-of-god-in-scientology.html). Scientology addresses the spirit—not the body or mind—and believes that Man is far more than a product of his environment, or his genes. Scientology comprises a body of knowledge which extends from certain fundamental truths. Prime among these are:

L. Ron Hubbard



* Man is an immortal*[[78]](#footnote-78)* spiritual being.
* His experience extends well beyond a single lifetime.
* His capabilities are unlimited, even if not presently realized.

Scientology further holds Man to be basically good, and that his spiritual salvation depends upon himself, his fellows and his attainment of brotherhood with the universe. Scientology is not a dogmatic[[79]](#footnote-79) religion in which one is asked to accept anything on faith alone. On the contrary, one discovers for oneself that the principles of Scientology are true by applying its principles and observing or experiencing the results. The ultimate goal of Scientology is true spiritual enlightenment and freedom for all.

Church of Scientology Celebrity Centres are Scientology churches that are open to the general public but are intended mostly for "artists, politicians, leaders of industry, sports figures and anyone with the power and vision to create a better world." Pictured is the Celebrity Centre International, Hollywood, California.

Scientology follows a long tradition of religious practice. Its roots lie in the deepest beliefs and aspirations of all great religions, thus encompassing a religious heritage as old and as varied as Man himself. Though it draws on the wisdom of some 50,000 years, Scientology is a new religion, one that has isolated fundamental laws of life and, for the first time, developed a workable technology that can be applied to help people achieve a happier and more spiritual existence in the here and now.

That Scientology’s development and rapid promulgation was made possible, in part, by advances in the physical sciences through the first half of the twentieth century is significant. For it [bridges Eastern philosophy with Western thought.](http://www.scientology.ca/l-ron-hubbard.html) In that way, Scientology constitutes Man’s first real application of scientific methodology to spiritual questions.

[Scientology is something one **does**](http://www.scientology.ca/what-is-scientology/the-practice-of-scientology.html), not something one ***believes in***.

Further Reading: <http://www.scientology.ca/what-is-scientology.html?link=side_wis>

# DAOISM

## Lunar New Year - Spring Festival - (Daoism/Confucianism/Buddhism)

This festival is a very important day for many people all over the world. This day marks the beginning of a new year for people of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Mongolian ancestry and their Diaspora. Many followers of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism also hold this day important for its symbolism of renewal. Governments, businesses and markets use the Gregorian calendar to regulate the days but use the lunisolar calendar to mark cultural and traditional days of significance such as the New Year.

For many in East Asia and South East Asia, the Lunar New Year is associated with spring and regardless of one's location it is always marked with great community festivities, gathering of families and feasts.

In Korea, and for many of Korean ancestry, this day is referred to as ''Seollal.'' It is day when families visit each other paying respects to their elders. Games and food are always part of the festivities.

In China, and for many of Chinese ancestry, this day is one of the most important traditional holidays. It is one of the longest, lasting for 15 days, and ends with the Lantern Festival. Festivities vary based on regional customs but is mainly centered around family, visiting of friends and of giving (by married couples) red coloured envelopes (Cantonese: lai sze or lai see; Mandarin: hong bao; Teochew: ang bao) to the elderly or unmarried juniors. These “red pockets” often contain money.

In Vietnam, and for many of Vietnamese ancestry, new years is referred to as ''Tet''. Similar to the Chinese and Korean New Year traditions, Tet is considered a family oriented holiday with time spent on visiting family and friends and feasting.

In Mongolia, and for many of Mongolian ancestry, the lunar new year is referred to as ''Tsagaan Sar.'' This day is marked with a large feast, the giving of gifts and family gathering. Tsagaan Sar is commonly celebrated on the same day as the Chinese Lunar New Year but has also been celebrated in the same time as Losar, the Tibetan New Year, which sometimes occur one lunar month after.

Further Reading:

<https://www.google.ca/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#safe=strict&q=when+is+Lunar+New+Year+(Spring+Festival)+2017>

# INDIGENOUS, FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, INUIT

## Louis Riel Day -Toronto - (First Nations, Métis)

Louis Riel was a great Métis leader who helped his people form a government and become part of the newly created Dominion of Canada in 1870. Fearing their rights would be overridden, by the new Canadian government, Métis People at the Red River settlement demanded the right to enter Confederation on their own terms. Louis Riel emerged as the spokesperson for the settlement and in 1870 Métis people challenged Canada's right to their homeland in an event known as the Red River Resistance. Riel insisted that Red River was prepared to join Canada but wanted guarantees of the Métis right to continue their culture. The result was the Manitoba Act, which contained most of the guarantees the Métis people had wanted.

However, the Canadian government did not honour its obligations to the Métis, and as a result, Métis people were further displaced. Fearing that more and more Métis lands would be lost to new settlers, Louis Riel was asked to lead his people once again in asserting Métis rights. In 1884, Louis Riel returned to present the Métis concerns to the Canadian government. Despite Riel's assistance, the federal government ignored Métis concerns, which led to the declaration of a provisional Métis government. This culminated in armed conflict between the Métis and the Canadian government. Louis Riel was captured, charged and tried for treason. On November 16, 1885 he was executed by the Canadian government for leading the Northwest Resistance in defense of Métis rights and the Métis way-of-life.

Louis Riel circa 1884

Every year Louis Riel Day is held to remember what Riel sacrificed and renew the commitment to completing his work. The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) celebrates Louis Riel Day to recognize the many contributions of the Métis to Canada and to highlight the continuing struggles that Métis continue to face. “We celebrate this day to recognize our ongoing struggle to fulfill Louis Riel’s dream: that the Métis take their rightful place within Confederation.” MNO President Gary Lipinski.

The Métis are recognized as one of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada by the Constitution Act of 1982. Louis Riel Day is a time to recognize and respect the history, culture and identity of Métis people. Additionally, the City of Toronto proclaimed November 16, “Louis Riel Day” and the Métis flag is raised at City Hall.

Today, Riel is considered the founder of Manitoba and is recognized by the Métis and other people as an advocate for minority rights in Canada. As stated by former Métis Nation of Ontario President, Tony Belcourt, ''November 16th marks a significant occasion of observance for the Métis Nation. This date gives us an opportunity to bring about an enlightened focus on the significant role and achievements of Louis Riel and the Métis Nation in the building of Canada.''

Further Reading: <http://www.metisnation.org/news-media/louis-riel-day/>

## National Indigenous Persons Day - Canada - (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)

Every year, people across Canada mark June 21 as a day to recognize the rights, outstanding contributions and achievements of Indigenous peoples. The dignity and unique diverse cultures of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada are celebrated. The Canadian Constitution recognizes these three groups as Indigenous peoples. National Indigenous Persons Day is an event that is growing in importance in Canada. June 21st, the Summer Solstice, is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, and marks the changing of seasons. It is seen by many peoples to be a day of great symbolism. Many schools will be acknowledging National Indigenous Persons Day and the Summer Solstice through activities that promote understanding and learning for all students.

What led to the creation of National Indigenous Persons Day?

* In 1982, the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) called for the creation of National Aboriginal Solidarity Day.
* In 1995, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended the designation of a National First Peoples Day.
* Also in 1995, The Sacred Assembly, a national conference of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples chaired by the late Elijah Harper, called for a national holiday to celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal peoples.

National Aboriginal Day was proclaimed in 1996 by former Governor General Romeo A. LeBlanc after consultations and statements in support for such a day were made by various Aboriginal groups. The following is an excerpt of the text of the proclamation to make National Aboriginal Day an official day of celebration recognized by the Crown.

*WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada recognizes the existing rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada;*

*WHEREAS in the constitution of Canada “Aboriginal peoples of Canada” include*

*the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada;*

*WHEREAS the Aboriginal peoples of Canada have made and continue to make valuable contributions to Canadian society and it is considered appropriate that there be, in each year, a date to mark and celebrate these contributions and to recognize the different cultures of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada;*

*AND WHEREAS many Aboriginal peoples celebrate the summer solstice, which*

*has an important symbolism within their cultures;*

*THEREFORE, His Excellency the Governor General in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, hereby directs that a proclamation do issue declaring June 21st of each year as “National Aboriginal Day.*

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Aboriginal_Day>

## Orange Shirt Day (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)

“Phyllis Webstad, a member of the Stswedem’c Xgat’tem First Nation in British Columbia, was forced to attend St. Joseph’s Mission Residential School, as her relatives had been before her. She entered the school in 1973 wearing a brand new orange shirt which was immediately confiscated by the staff and replaced with a uniform. She never saw the shirt again, and began to associate the colour with the traumatic experiences in the school and the loss of language and cultural identity she suffered.

In 2013, Webstad transformed her negative experiences into something positive by creating a Nationally recognized Orange Shirt Day. Celebrated annually, this day acknowledges the residential school system in Canada, honours those who survived, and remembers those who did not. It is a day to demonstrate, by wearing orange, that all students matter.”

Further Reading:

<http://montrealgazette.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-orange-shirt-day-honours-the->students-of-residential-schools-and-educates-others

## Powley Day (First Nations, Métis)

September 19th is Powley Day. It is a day to recognise the advocacy that lead to increased acknowledgement of Métis rights. Historically Indigenous People in North America self-governed their right to hunt game for the purpose of sustenance. The Métis were not governed by provincial regulations with regard to hunting. Powley Day commemorates Steve Powley and his son Roddy who were Métis hunters from the Sault St. Marie area, who in 1993 were charged for hunting without a license. The charges lead to court battles for the right to harvest and eventually saw its way through to the Supreme Court of Canada, where it was decided that Métis people indeed have the right to harvest foods since this is traditional right of their ancestors. This decision is a significant milestone for Métis in Ontario and Canada.

On October 22, 1993, father and son, Steve and Roddy Powley harvested a bull moose just outside of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The Powleys were charged by Conservation Officers for hunting moose without a license and unlawful possession of moose contrary to Ontario’s Game and Fish Act.

The Métis Nation of Ontario decided to use the charges against the Powleys as a test case to prove Indigenous Peoples’ right to hunt. The Métis Nation of Ontario provided full political and financial support throughout the case. On September 19th, 2003, the Supreme Court declared that Steve and Roddy Powley, as members of the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community, had the Métis right to harvest and that their rights were protected under section 35 of The Constitution Act, 1982. Powley Day celebrates the courage of their convictions. Métis rights were recognized and affirmed by the Supreme Court for the first time. This Supreme Court decision initiated a whole new era of Métis rights in Ontario and across the Métis Homeland. Métis harvesting rights are especially important at this time of the year (in the autumn). They are now recognized by the Province of Ontario through a Harvesting Agreement. Every year on September 19, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) marks Powley Day to remember the decade long struggle for Métis rights.

Steve Powley

Information compiled by the Aboriginal Education Centre

Gathered from The Métis Nation of Ontario Website [www.metisnation.org](http://www.metisnation.org)

## Remembrance Day (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)

November 11 also marks the importance of Remembrance Day to honour the sacrifices made by Aboriginal veterans, as well as the continuing contributions of the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who enlist. According to statistics from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, in the First World War alone, one in three Aboriginal men enlisted.

Further Reading: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/aboriginal-veterans>

## Treaties Recognition Week (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)

Ontario has passed new legislation to recognize the importance of treaties and to bring awareness to the treaty relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the province.

The Treaties Recognition Week Act, 2016 introduced and passed with the support of all parties today, designates the first week of November each year as Treaties Recognition Week. The first legislation of its kind in Canada, Treaties Recognition Week will provide a recurring opportunity for teachers to plan learning activities about treaties during the school year and will help promote awareness of treaties in the broader public.

This legislation is part of Ontario's [Treaty Strategy](https://www.ontario.ca/page/treaties)which is promoting constructive engagement and revitalizing treaty relationships between the province and Indigenous communities. Treaties Recognition Week is also one of many steps on Ontario's journey of healing and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It reflects Ontario's commitment to work with Indigenous partners, creating a better future for everyone in the province.

Further Reading: <https://news.ontario.ca/mirr/en/2016/05/ontario-proclaims-first-week-of-november-treaties-recognition-week.html>

# GAY, LESBIAN AND STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK (GLSEN)

## International Day of Silence (GLSEN)

Founded in 1996, the Day of Silence has become the largest single student-led action towards creating safer schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. From the first-ever Day of Silence at a single school in 1996, to the organizing efforts in over 8,000 middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities across the continent in 2008, its textured history reflects its diversity in both numbers and reach.

Are homophobia and transphobia real in our schools? Here are some of the results of phase one of Egale Canada First National Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools (2008):

* Over two-thirds of LGBTQ[[80]](#footnote-80) participants reported that they felt unsafe at school, compared to 1 in 5 straight participants.
* Over one-third have skipped school because they felt unsafe there or on their way there, compared to one-eighth of straight participants.
* Half the LGBTQ participants are only “out”[[81]](#footnote-81) to a few friends at school, or to no one at school.
* Over half of LGBTQ participants reported that they have been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation.
* Almost half (49%) have had mean rumours spread about them at school.
* Almost a third (31%) have had mean rumours spread on the internet or through text messages because they are LGBTQ.
* Over a quarter have been physically harassed because of their sexual orientation.
* 41% had been sexually harassed compared to 19% of straight kids.
* LGBTQ participants reported feeling unsafe on school buses, in the gym and changing rooms, in the cafeteria, under stairwells, and in hallways.
* LGBTQ participants who had been harassed or assaulted were much less likely than straight participants to report it to school staff members.
* fewer than half felt comfortable talking to their parents about LGBTQ issues.
* Almost half (47.5%) agreed with the statement, "It is hard for me to feel accepted at my school" (compared to one fifth [19%] of straight participants).
* Almost two-thirds (62%) agreed with the statement, "Sometimes I feel very depressed about my school" (compared to just over one-third [36%] of straight participants).
* Almost 40% of straight participants reported that they made homophobic remarks sometimes or frequently.
* 19% of LGBTQ participants made homophobic remarks sometimes or frequently, perhaps to fit in.
* Day of Silence is to bring attention to this problem, let students who experience such bullying know that they are not alone and ask schools to take action to address the problem.

Anti-LGBT bullying and harassment affects all students. Slurs such as "faggot" and "dyke" are commonplace in school. The Day of Silence is an example of students, from middle school to college, working together proactively to bring attention to the anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment experienced by LGBT and straight students alike. GLSEN, the Day of Silence's organizational sponsor, encourages participants to be counted by registering at GLSEN, protects the privacy of students and does not publish a list of students who have registered or their schools. Many students who participate also belong to Gay-Straight Alliance student clubs, of which nearly 4,000 are registered with GLSEN. The first GSA was created by a straight student over 20 years ago, in the fall of 1988. Have your staff advisor to your school's Queer-Straight Alliance register your student group at [*www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp and at mygsa.org*](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp%20and%20at%20mygsa.org)

The Day of Silence is an opportunity for students to work toward improving school climate for all students. GLSEN advises students interested in participating to discuss their intentions with their administration and teachers long before the event. The day is most successful when schools and students work together to show their commitment to ensuring safe schools for all students. There is no single way to participate, and students are encouraged to take part in the way that is the most positive and uplifting for their school.

Further Reading: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp>

Further Reading: <http://www.egale.ca/>

## No Name-Calling Week (GLSEN)

No Name-Calling Week was inspired by a young adult novel entitled *The Misfits* by popular author, James Howe. The book tells the story of four best friends trying to survive the seventh grade in the face of all too frequent taunts based on their weight, height, intelligence, and sexual orientation/gender expression. Motivated by the inequities they see around them, the "Gang of Five" (as they are known) creates a new political party during student council elections and run on a platform aimed at wiping out name-calling of all kinds. Though they lose the election, they win the support of the school's principal for their cause and their idea for a "No Name-Calling Day" at school.

Motivated by this simple, yet powerful, idea, the No Name-Calling Week Coalition, (created by GLSEN) and Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, and 40 national partner organizations, created *No Name-Calling Week*. During the week the project seeks to focus national attention on the problem of name-calling in schools, and to provide students and educators with the tools and inspiration to launch ongoing dialogues about ways to eliminate name-calling in their communities.

The project is targeted at grades five through eight students — aged 10-14 years when the problem of name-calling is particularly acute but the concept can be easily adapted by students and educators at other grade levels. The project includes a resource guide which includes an overview of the campaign, instructions for organizing and publicizing No Name-Calling Week in individual schools, lesson plans and other curricular material, and further resources for those interested in extending the experience. The project also includes a 27-minute video about name-calling targeting grades 5-8. The video is accompanied by a Teacher Resource Book that includes teaching ideas and fact sheets. In addition to the resource materials and video, stickers and posters are available to support the program.

For further information: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp>

# GRASS ROOTS LGBTQ ACTIVISTS

## International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (Grass Roots LGBTQ Activists)

Although in some parts of the world, diverse sexual orientations and gender identity are becoming more accepted, members of the LGBTTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-spirited, and Queer) community still experience discrimination, harassment and persecution. In order to address the challenges faced by the LGBTTQ community, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia was created. The first International Day against it was held on May 17th, 2002, in France. It is now recognized by the European Union and is celebrated by close to 100 countries, including here in Canada. May 17th was selected for this event because on **May 17th, 1992**, homosexuality was removed from the World Health Organization's International Classification of Disease[[82]](#footnote-82). The day is meant *“to draw the attention of policy makers, opinion leaders, social movements, public opinion, the media, etc., to this issue, and to promote a world of tolerance, respect and freedom regardless of people’s sexual orientation or gender identity*.”

Homophobia and other forms of gender-based violence remain a serious concern for many TDSB schools. If staff become aware of any such incidents they should make a report in writing to administration, respond to the specific incident and student(s) involved and plan a school climate response.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Day_Against_Homophobia,_Transphobia_and_Biphobia>

## International Family Visibility Day (Grass Roots LGBTQ Activists)

This day (see above International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia) focusses this year on the visibility and better understanding of non-traditional family units.

LGBTQ family organizations from around the world joined forces to increase the international visibility of LGBTQ families. The Toronto-based LGBTQ Parenting Network has taken this as an opportunity to support teachers in shedding a light on the wide diversity of family structures. Spearheaded by LGBTQ families, May 6 will be a day to celebrate all people who raise children and all kinds of families. Regardless of different legal, political and social circumstances around the world, the dramatic increase in the numbers of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) people choosing to raise children is a global phenomenon. This day provides an opportunity to establish ongoing international cooperation in areas such as research, visibility and advocacy, and the development of resources and programs for LGBTQ families worldwide.

# GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH[[83]](#footnote-83) - U.S. TRANS ADVOCACY

## International Transgender Day of Remembrance

(US Trans Advocacy, Gwendolyn Ann Smith)

The Transgender Day of Remembrance was set aside to memorialize those who were killed because of transphobia: anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. This Day of Remembrance is held in November to honour Rita Hester, whose murder on November 28th, 1998 caused the creation of "Remembering Our Dead" web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999. Rita Hester's murder — like most anti-transgender murder cases — has yet to be solved.

The deaths of those based on anti-transgender hatred or prejudice are largely ignored. Over the last decade, more than one person per month has died due to transgender-based hate or prejudice, regardless of any other factors in their lives. This trend shows no sign of abating.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance serves several purposes. It raises public awareness of hate crimes against transgender people. The Day of Remembrance publicly mourns and honours the lives of our brothers and sisters who might otherwise be forgotten. Through vigils, we express love and respect for our people in the face of indifference and hatred. This day reminds non-transgender people that we are their sons, daughters, parents, friends and lovers and gives trans-allies a chance to step forward with us and stand in vigil, memorializing those of us who've died by anti-transgender violence.

Gwendolyn Anne Smith - Transgender Rights Advocate

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is also an opportunity to acknowledge one of the most common reasons students are bullied and harassed: their gender identity/expression. We encourage all staff and students to create awareness and organize actions with the goal of ending transphobia.

For more information, please see Youtube video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoUae-mInKo>

# HINDUISM

## Akshaya Tritya (Hinduism)

Akshaya Tritya which is also known as Akha Teej is a highly auspicious[[84]](#footnote-84) holy day for Hindu communities. If falls during Shukla Paksha Tritya in the month of Vaiśākha. Akshaya Tritya falling on a Rohini Nakshatra day with Wednesday is considered very auspicious. The word *Akshaya* means never diminishing. Hence the benefits of doing any Japa, Yajna, Pitra-Tarpan, Dan Punha on this day never diminish and remain with the person forever.

Akshaya Tritya is believed to bring good luck and success. As an example, many people purchase gold on this day as it is believed that by doing so brings prosperity and more wealth in the future. Being Akshaya day, it is believed that gold, bought on this day, will never diminish and continue to grow or appreciate in value.

Further Reading: <http://hinduism.about.com/od/festivalsholidays/a/akshayatritiya.htm>

## Anant Chaturdashi (Hinduism)

There was a Brahmin[[85]](#footnote-85) named Sumant. From his wife Diksha he had a daughter named Sushila. After the death of Diksha, Sumant married a women named Karkash who began to give a lot of trouble to his daughter Sushila. Sushila married a man Kaundinya, and both decided to leave the house to avoid the harassment of the step-mother. On the way they stopped near a river. Kaundinya went to take bath, and Sushila joined a group of women who were performing worship. They told Sushila that they were worshipping "Anant". "What kind of worship is this?

They told her that it was known as Anant's vow. Then they explained to her the importance of that vow. Some prepared "Gharga" (made of flour) and "anarase" (special food). Half of this must be given to the Brahmins.

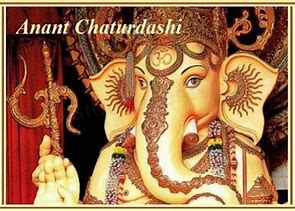
After, a hooded snake (cobra) made of "darbha" (sacred grass) is put in a bamboo basket. Then the snake ("shesh") is worshipped with scented flowers, oil lamp and incense sticks. Food is offered to the snake and a silk string is kept before the god, and tied to the wrist. This string is called "anant", it has 14 knots, and is coloured with "Kumkum[[86]](#footnote-86)". Women tie the "anant" on their left hand and men on their right. The purpose of this vow is to obtain divinity and wealth, and is kept for 14 years. After listening to this explanation Sushila decided to take the Anant vow.

From that day she and her husband Kaundinya began to prosper and became very rich. One day Kaundinya, noticed the Anant string on Sushila's left hand. When he heard the story of the Anant vow, he was displeased and maintained that they had become rich, not because of any power of Anant, but because of the wisdom he had acquired by his own efforts. A heated argument followed, and at the end Kaundinya took the Anant string from Sushila's hand and threw it into the fire.

After this all sorts of calamities befell them and finally they were reduced to extreme poverty. Kaundinya understood that it was the punishment for having dishonoured Anant, and decided that he would undergo rigorous penance until God Himself appeared to him.

***In Search of Anant***

Kaundinya went into the forest. There he saw a tree full of mangoes, but no one was eating the mangoes. The entire tree was attacked by worms. He asked the tree if he had seen Anant, but got a negative reply. Then Kaundinya saw a cow with her calf, then a bull standing on a field of grass without eating the grass. Then he saw two big lakes joined to each other with their waters mixing with one another. Further he saw a donkey and an elephant. To everyone, Kaundinya asked about Anant, but no one had even heard this name. Then he became desperate and prepared a rope to hang himself.

Then suddenly an old venerable Brahmin appeared before him. He removed the rope from Kaundinya's neck and led him into a cave. At first it was very dark. But then a bright light appeared and they reached a big palace. A great assembly of men and women had gathered. The old Brahmin went straight towards the throne.

Then Kaundinya could no longer see the Brahmin, but only Vishnu instead. Kaundinya realized that Vishnu himself had come to save him, and that Vishnu was Anant, the Eternal One. He confessed his sin in failing to recognize the Eternal in the string on Sushila's hand. Anant promised Kaundinya that if he made the 14-year-vow, he would be free from all his sins, and would obtain wealth, children and happiness. Then Anant disclosed the meaning of what Kaundinya had seen during the search. Anant explained that the mango tree was a Brahmin, who in a previous life had acquired plenty of knowledge, but had not communicated it to anyone. The cow was the earth, which at the beginning had eaten all the seeds of plants. The bull was religion itself. Now he was standing on a field of green grass. The two Lakes were two sisters who loved each other very much, but all their alms were spent on each other only. The donkey was cruelty and anger. Finally the elephant Kaundinya's pride.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anant_Chaturdashi>

## Diwali (Hinduism/Jainism/Sikhism)

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Jains. Diwali celebrates the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. Diwali also signifies many different things to different people. From a cultural perspective, Diwali marks the beginning of the new year for farmers who plant their crops after Diwali, as well as for business people and merchants who traditionally settle all accounts on this day and begin the new financial year. Everywhere that it is celebrated, it signifies the renewal of life.

***Hindus:*** Diwali is dedicated to the Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.

In Bengal, Diwali honours the Goddess Kali. (see Kali Puja below)

***Sikhs:*** Diwali commemorates the return of the sixth guru (Guru Har Gobind Ji) to the Holy city of Amritsar after his release from detention.

***Jainism:*** Diwali commemorates the passing into Nirvana of Mahavira.

To celebrate this joyous and important festival, people congregate with friends and family, exchange gifts of sweets, and greet each other with the words “Subh Diwali” or ”Diwali di vadiyan.” Some set off fireworks and wear new clothes. Many light small clay lamps, called dipas or diyas, candles, and even neon lights.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali>

## Durga Ashtami (Hinduism)

Durga Ashtami or Maha Ashtami is one of the most auspicious days of the five day long [Durga Puja](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durga_Puja) Festival. In India fastings are under taken by many people on this holy occasion. This day is also known for 'Astra Puja'(Worshiping Weapons) as on this day the weapons of goddess Durga are worshipped. The day is also known as Vira Ashtami as they are seen to use arms or martial arts on this day.

Further Reading: <http://www.drikpanchang.com/vrats/masik-durgashtami-dates.html>

## Durga Puja Saptami (Hinduism)

For five straight days in October, the Durga Puja—or just Puja—is a giant, crowds-crawling Oktoberfest without the alcohol. Perhaps it is the only occasion when Bengalis en masse give themselves sanction for unabashedly showing off new clothes, new energy levels, new acquisitions, and members of families. With some powerful magnetic force aligning all the iron filings scattered about, Kolkata becomes rearranged, paradoxically charged with Pujo-fuelled derangement.

That the goddess comes to town with her children, leaving her reluctant-householder husband behind on Mount Kailash, makes Puja a singular celebration of family values and domesticity.

Further Reading: <http://qz.com/529668/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-frenzied-magical-durga-puja-in-kolkata/>

## Ganesh Chauturthi (Hinduism)

Ganesh Chauturthi is a ten-day Hindu festival celebrated to honour the elephant-headed God Ganesha's birthday. He is the younger son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

There are two different versions about Ganesha's birth. One has it that Goddess Parvati created Ganesha out of dirt off her body while having a bath and set him to guard her door while she finished her bath. Shiva (the father) who had gone out, returned at that time, but as Ganesha didn't know of him, stopped him from entering. An angry Shiva severed the head of Ganesha after combat between the two. Parvati (the mother) was enraged and Shiva promised the slain Ganesha would live again. The devas[[87]](#footnote-87) went in search of a dead person who’s head was facing north but found only the head of an elephant. Shiva fixed the elephant's head on the child and brought him back to life.

The Elephant Headed God, Ganesha

The other legend has it that Ganesha was created by Shiva and Parvati on request of the Devas, to be a vighnakartaa (obstacle-creator) in the path of rakshasas (demonic beings), and a vighnahartaa (obstacle-averter) to help the Devas.

This 10 day festival begins on Shukla Chauturthi which is the fourth day of the waxing moon period, and ends on the 14th day of the waxing moon period known as Anant Chaturdashi. It is known as one of the most grandiose festivals of India.

Further Reading: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/what-is-ganesh-chaturthi-why-is-it-celebrated/1/475604.html>

## Kali Puja (Hinduism)

Kali Puja also known as Shyama Puja or Mahanisha Puja, is a festival dedicated to the [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) goddess [Kali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kali), celebrated on the new moon day of the Hindu month [Kartik](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kartika_(month)) especially in [Bengal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengal), [Odisha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odisha), [Bihar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bihar) and [Assam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assam). It coincides with the pan-Indian [Lakshmi Puja](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lakshmi_Puja) day of [Diwali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali). While the [Bengalis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengalis), [Odias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odia_people) and [Assamese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assamese_people) adore goddess Kali on this day the rest of India worships goddess Lakshmi on Diwali. Mahanisha puja is performed by the [Maithili people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maithili_people) of [Mithila](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithila_(India)) region in India and Nepal.

Further Reading: <http://www.ancient.eu/Kali/>

## Raksha Bandhan (Hinduism)

Raksha Bandhanis also called Rakhi Purnima or simply Rakhi or "Rakhri", in many parts of India. The festival is a Hindu festival and is also a secular festival which celebrates the love and duty between brothers and sisters.

Further Reading: <http://www.raksha-bandhan.com/>

## Hinduism New Year (Hinduism Ugédi)

Ugédi is the New Year's Day for the people of the [Telugu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telugu_people) and [Kannada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kannada) communities in [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India). It falls on a different day every year because the [Hindu calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_calendar) is a [lunisolar calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunisolar_calendar). This holiday is one of the most auspicious days for Telugus and Kannadigas. The [Saka calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saka_calendar) begins with the month of [Chaitra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaitra) (March–April) and Ugédi marks the first day of the new year. [Chaitra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaitra) is the first month in [Panchanga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panchanga) which is the Indian calendar. In some parts of [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) it is known as [Vikram Samvat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vikram_Samvat) or Bhartiya Nav Varsh. This holiday is mostly prevalent in [Andhra Pradesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andhra_Pradesh), [Telangana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telangana), [Karnataka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karnataka), and [Maharashtra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maharashtra). [Gudi Padwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gudi_Padwa), which is the [Marathi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marathi_people) new year, is also celebrated on the same day.

The name Yugadi or Ugédi is derived from the [Sanskrit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanskrit) words *yuga* (age) and *ádi* (beginning): "the beginning of a new age". Yugadi specifically refers to the start of the age we are living in now, the [Kali Yuga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kali_Yuga). The Kali Yuga began when [Lord Krishna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Krishna) left the world.

Further Reading: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugádi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugadi)

## Holi (Hinduism)

Holi is an important annual Hindu two-day festival celebrating the beginning of spring. There are quite a few diverse accounts as to the origins of Holi, but it is primarily considered a festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil and devotion over ambition, as well as a rural and agricultural festival of fertility. Holi is traditionally known as the “festival of colour” because the sprinkling of coloured powder (called abeer or gulal) is a major component of the celebrations. Water balloons containing gulal are tossed at friends and neighbours in the spirit of fun, and Indian drums (dhola) and songs often accompany the festivities.

Holi is usually celebrated with a great deal of zest and verve, as it is a time to remember the brightness and splendor of living, and a time to spread joy, colour, and love. Holi is more commonly called Phagwa by Indo-Trinidadians and Indo-Guyanese.

Further Reading: <http://www.religionfacts.com/holi>

## Karva Chauth (Hinduism)

Karva Chauthis a one-day festival celebrated by Hindu women in North India in which married women fast from sunrise to moonrise for the safety and longevity of their husbands.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karva_Chauth#Popular_cultural_aspects_and_critiques>

## Krishna Janmashtami (Hinduism)

Krishna Janmashtami (or as it is sometimes more simply known, Janmashtami) is a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Krishna, an Avatar[[88]](#footnote-88) of the Hindu deity Vishnu. It is considered a joyful and celebratory, yet pious event, and is often marked with dramatic re-enactments of Krishna’s life and devotees[[89]](#footnote-89) flocking to Krishna’s temples to seek his blessings. Devotees keep fast on Janmashtami, as well as chant hymns and perform dances.

Janmashtami is also a time to beautify and decorate the house in honour of Krishna. Idols of Krishna within the household become notably important, as they are used by devotees to perform the pooja—a form of worship involving prayers, offerings, and sacrifices.

Krishna Arjuna shown in his universal form. Rendering by C. Konddiah Raja, c. 1950's

Further Reading: [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/**hinduism**/holydays/**janamashtami**.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/holydays/janamashtami.shtml)

## Maha Shivaratri (Hinduism)

While most [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) festivals are celebrated during the day, Shivaratri is celebrated during the night by keeping a "jaagaran" - a night-long vigil with worship. It is believed that Lord Shiva saved the universe from darkness and ignorance. This is the day when jyotiswaroop (luminous) shivalinga emerged between Bramha and Vishnu to pacify them. This day is also believed to be the day that Shiva was married to the Goddess [Parvati](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parvati). The Maha Shivaratri festival, also popularly known as 'Shivaratri' 'Great Night of Shiva', marks the convergence of Shiva and [Shakti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakti). Maha Shivaratri is celebrated on the Krishna Paksha Chaturdashi of the [Bikram Sambat Calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bikram_Sambat) on the month of [Falgun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falgun) as per Amavasya-ant month calculation. As per Poornima-ant month calculation, the day is Krishna Paksha Trayodashi or Chaturdashi of [Bikram Sambat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bikram_Sambat) calendar month [Falgun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falgun) which falls in February or March as per the English [Gregorian calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar). Of the twelve Shivaratris in the year, the Maha Shivaratri is the most holy.

The festival is principally celebrated by offerings of [Bael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bael)[[90]](#footnote-90) (Vilvam) leaves to Shiva, all-day fasting and an all-night-vigil ([jagaran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jagaran))with vedic[[91]](#footnote-91), tantrik[[92]](#footnote-92) ritualistic worship of Shiva . All through the day, devotees chant "[Om Namah Shivaya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Om_Namah_Shivaya)", the sacred [mantra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mantra) of Shiva. Penances are performed in order to gain boons in the practice of [Yoga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga) and meditation, in order to reach life's highest good steadily and swiftly. On this day, the planetary positions in the Northern hemisphere act as potent catalysts to help a person raise his or her spiritual energy more easily. The benefits of powerful ancient Sanskrit mantras such as [Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahamrityunjaya_Mantra) increase greatly on this night.

In [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal), Shivaratri is a national holiday. Millions of Hindus from around the world and Nepal itself attend Shivaratri together at the famous [Pashupatinath Temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pashupatinath_Temple) which is the holy Head of Lord Shiva. Thousands of devotees also attend Mahasivaratri at the famous Shiva Shakti Peetham of Nepal. The [Nepal Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal_Army) takes a parade around the city to pay tribute to Lord Shiva and the holy rituals are performed ll over the nations.

In [Indo-Caribbean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Caribbean) communities throughout the West Indies, thousands of Hindus spend the auspicious night in over four hundred temples across the country, offering special *jhalls[[93]](#footnote-93)* to Lord Shiva. In [Mauritius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritius), [Hindus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindus) go on pilgrimage to [Ganga Talao](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganga_Talao), a crater-lake, turned into the main Hindu prayer site of this sole [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu) majority African country. Maha Shivaratri is the main [Hindu festival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_festival) among Hindu diasporas from [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal), Southern Indian States "[Tamil Nadu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Nadu), [Kerala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerala), [Karnataka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karnataka), [Andhra Pradesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andhra_Pradesh), [Telengana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telangana)" and Northern Indian State of [Bihar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bihar).

On Maha Shivaratri, Nishita Kala is the ideal time to observe Shiva Pooja. Nishita Kala celebrates when Lord Shiva appeared on the Earth in the form of Linga. On this day, in all Shiva temples, the most auspicious Lingodbhava Puja is performed.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maha_Shivaratri>

## Makara Sankranti (Hinduism)

Makara Sankranti is a [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) festival celebrated in almost all parts of [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal) and [Bangladesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangladesh) in many cultural forms. It is a [harvest festival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvest_festival) that falls on the [Magh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magh_(Nepali_calendar)) month of the [Nepali calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepali_calendar) (Hindu Solar Calendar). Makara Sankranti marks the transition of the sun into the zodiacal sign of Makara (Capricorn) on its celestial path. The day is also believed to mark the arrival of spring in India and the [Magh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magh_(Nepali_calendar)) month in [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal) and is a traditional event. Makara Sankranti is a solar event making it one of the few [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu) festivals which fall on the same date in the [Nepali calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepali_calendar) every year: 14 January, with some exceptions when the festival is celebrated on 15 January.

Further Reading: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/holydays/makar.shtml>

## Navratri (Hinduism)

Navratri is a nine day festival which runs in the Spring and the Autumn of each year.

**Navratri** is a festival dedicated to the worship of the [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) deity [Durga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durga). The word *Navratri* means 'nine nights' in [Sanskrit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanskrit), “*nava”* meaning nine and “*ratri”* meaning nights. During these nine nights and ten days, nine forms of [Devi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devi) are worshipped. The tenth day is commonly referred to as [Vijayadashami](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayadashami) or "[Dussehra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dussehra)" (also spelled Dasera). Navaratri is an important major festival and is celebrated all over India and Nepal. [Diwali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali), the festival of lights, is celebrated twenty days after Dasera. Though there are in total five types of Navaratri that come in a year, [Sharada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saraswati#Nomenclature) Navratri is the most popular one. Hence, the term Navratri is often used to refer specifically to Sharada Navaratri. (Sharada is a name for the goddess [Saraswati](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saraswati)).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Navratri Day** | **Day** | **Form of Goddess** | **Tithi[[94]](#footnote-94)** | **Pujan[[95]](#footnote-95)** | **Colour** |
| Day 1 | [Pratipad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratipada)a | [Shailaputri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shailaputri) | Ghatasthapana | Shailputri Puja | [Grey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grey) |
| Day 2 | [Dwitiya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwitiya) | [Brahmacharini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmacharini) | Chandra Darshana | Brahmacharini Puja | [Orange](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_(colour)) |
| Day 3 | [Tritiya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tritiya) | [Chandraghanta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandraghanta) | Sindoora Tritiya, Sowbhagya Teej | Chandraghanta Puja | [White](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White) |
| Day 4 | [Chaturthi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaturthi) | [Kushmanda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kushmanda) | Varada Vinayaka Chauthurthi | Bhouma Chaturthi | [Red](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red) |
| Day 5 | [Panchami](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panchami) | [Skandamata](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skandamata) | Lalita Panchami | Upanga Lalita Vratam, Lalitha Gauri Vratam, Skandamata Puja | [Navy Blue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navy_Blue) |
| Day 6 | [Shashthi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shashthi) | [Katyayini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katyayini) | Maha Shashti | Saraswati Awahanam, Katyayani Puja | [Yellow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow) |
| Day 7 | [Saptami](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saptami) | [Kaalaratri](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kaalaratri&action=edit&redlink=1) | Maha Saptami | Saraswati Puja, Kalaratri Puja, Utsava Puja | [Green](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green) |
| Day 8 | [Ashtami](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtami) | [Mahagauri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahagauri) | [Durga Ashtami](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durga_Ashtami), Maha Ashtami | Saraswati Mata Puja, Mahagauri Puja, Sandhi Puja | [Peacock Green](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Peacock_Green&action=edit&redlink=1) |
| Day 9 | [Navami](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navami) | [Siddhidatri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siddhidatri) | Khande Navami, Durga Visarjana, Maha Navami | Ayudha Puja, Kanya puja | [Purple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purple) |

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navratri>

## Pasha Putrada Ekadashi (Hinduism)

Putrada Ekadashi (lit. "ekadashi that is the giver of sons") is a [Hindu holy day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_festival), which falls on the 11th lunar day ([ekadashi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekadashi)) of the fortnight of the waxing moon in the [Hindu month](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_month) of [Pasha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pausha) (December–January). This day is also known as Pasha Putrada Ekadashi, to differentiate it from the other [Putrada Ekadashi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shravana_Putrada_Ekadashi) in [Shravana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shraavana) (July–August), which is also called Shravana Putrada Ekadashi.

Couples fast on this day and worship the god [Vishnu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishnu) for a good son. This day is especially observed by [Vaishnavas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaishnava), followers of Vishnu.

A son is considered entirely important in Hindu society as he takes care of the parents in their old age in life and by offering shraddha (ancestor rites) ensures well-being of his parents in the after-life. While each ekadashi is prescribed for certain goals, the goal of having sons is so great that two Putrada ("giver of sons") Ekadashi are devoted to it. The rest of the ekadashi do not enjoy this privilege. It also highlights the preference to have sons instead of daughters.

Further Reading: <http://blog.onlineprasad.com/importance-of-paush-putrada-ekadashi/>

## Punjabi Lohri (Hinduism/Punjabi)

Lohri, is a popular Punjabi festival, celebrated by people from the [Punjab region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjab_region) of [South Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia). The origins of Lohri are many and link the festival to [Punjab region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjab_region). Many people believe the festival commemorates the passing of the [winter solstice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_solstice) as Lohri was originally celebrated on [winter solstice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_solstice) day, being the shortest day and the longest night of the year.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lohri>

## Raksha Bandhan (Hinduism/Jainism)

**Raksha Bandhan**, also called as **Raksha Bandhan** or simply **Rakhi** in many parts of India and Nepal, is a Hindu religious and secular festival. In simple words, Raksha Bandhan means "bond of protection".

The festival celebrates the love and duty between brothers and sisters. It is also popularly used to celebrate any brother-sister type of relationship between men and women who may or may not be biologically related. The festival is also observed by Jainism as a religious festival, as on Raksha Bandhan, Jainism priests give threads to devotees. The Brahmins and Behuns (Vedic Brahmins) of Nepal and North India change their Janai on this occasion.

The festival is also celebrated by many communities as a secular festival. This secular aspect is observed among all people, irrespective of their religion, in West Bengal and Punjab. Various fairs are held in Punjab to mark the occasion.

On Raksha Bandhan, a sister will tie a *rakhi* (sacred thread) on her brother's wrist. This symbolizes the sister's love and prayers for her brother's well-being, and the brother's lifelong vow to protect her. The festival falls on the full moon day (Shravan Poornima) of the month of Shravan the Hindu lunisolar Nepali calendar. Raksha Bandhan is primarily observed in northern and western India, Mauritius and major parts of Nepal. It is also celebrated by Hindus in parts of Pakistan, and by some non-resident Indians and non-resident Nepalis around the world.

Further Reading: <http://metro.co.uk/2016/08/18/raksha-bandhan-2016-a-guide-to-the-hindu-festival-of-rakhi-6076126/>

## Saka New Year -Nyepi - (Hinduism)

Nyepiis a [Balinese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bali) "Day of Silence" that is commemorated every *Isakawarsa* ([Saka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balinese_saka_calendar) new year) according to the Balinese calendar. It is a [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu) celebration mainly celebrated in [Bali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bali), [Indonesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia). Nyepi, a public holiday in Indonesia, is a day of silence, fasting and meditation for the Balinese. The day following Nyepi is also celebrated as New Year's Day. On this day, the youth of Bali practice the ceremony of “[Omed-omedan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omed-omedan)” (The Kissing Ritual) to celebrate the new year.

Observed from 6 a.m. until 6 a.m. the next morning, Nyepi is a day reserved for [self-reflection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-reflection), and as such, anything that might interfere with that purpose is restricted. The main restrictions are no lighting of fires (and electric lights must be kept low); **no working**; no entertainment or pleasure; no traveling; and, for some, no talking or eating at all. The effect of these prohibitions is that Bali's usually bustling streets and roads are empty, there is little or no noise from TVs and radios, and few signs of activity are seen even inside homes. The only people to be seen outdoors are the [Pecalang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preman_(Indonesian_gangster))[[96]](#footnote-96), traditional security men who patrol the streets to ensure the prohibitions are being followed.

Members of the Pecalang Security Force

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nyepi>

## Shri/Rama Navami (Hinduism)

Lord Rama was the prince of the Ikshvaku race[[97]](#footnote-97). He was virtuous and of manly strength. He was the Lord of the mind and the senses. Brave and valiant, He was yet gentle and modest. He was a sage in counsel, kind and sweet in speech, and most courteous and handsome in appearance. He was the master of all the divine weapons, and a great warrior. Ever devoted to the good and prosperity of His kingdom and His subjects, He was a defender of the weak and the protector of the righteous. Endowed with numerous wondrous powers of the mind, He was well versed in all sciences—in military science as well as the science of the Self.

Further Reading: <http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Rama_Navami>

## Solar New Year Mesha Sankranta (Hinduism)

Mesha Sankranti (also called Mesha Sankramana) is a [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu) festival and refers to the day when the sun enters the Zodiac sign of Mesha (Aries). The day represents the vernal (Spring) equinox which occurs around 21 March but the day is marked in April. The day is important in solar and lunisolar calendars followed on the subcontinent. Mesha Sankranti is a solar event and generally falls on 13 April but sometimes also falls on 14 April according to the [Gregorian calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar). A number of festivals are celebrated on this day.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesha_Sankranti>

## Thai Pongal (Tamil)

Thai Pongal is a Thanksgiving to the Sun God of Harvest. Thai Pongal is a four-day festival which, according to the [Tamil calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_calendar), is normally celebrated from January 14 to January 17. This corresponds to the last day of the Tamil month [Maargazhi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_calendar). Thai Pongal day itself usually falls on the Gregorian calendar date of January 14 as the sun enters into Capricorn & the Thai ([Tamil Calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Calendar)) Tamil month starts.

Thai Pongal is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Tamil people in the Indian State of [Tamil Nadu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Nadu), the four Indian Union Territories of Puducherry, in [Sri Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka), as well as by Tamils worldwide, including those in [Malaysia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysia), [Mauritius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritius), [South Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa), United States, [Singapore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore), Canada and the UK.

Thai Pongal corresponds to [Makara Sankranthi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Makara_Sankranthi), the harvest festival celebrated throughout India. The day marks the start of the sun's six-month-long journey northwards (the Uttaraayanam). This also corresponds to the Indic solstice when the sun purportedly enters the 10th house of the Indian zodiac Makara or Capricorn. Thai Pongal is mainly celebrated to convey appreciation to the Sun God for a successful harvest. Part of the celebration is the boiling of the first rice of the season consecrated to the Sun - the Surya Maangalyam.

Further Reading: <http://www.sangam.org/CULTURE/pongal.htm>

## Vaisakhi (Hinduism/Sikhism)

**Vaisakhi**, also known as **Baisakhi**, **Vaishakhi**, or **Vasakhi** is a historical and religious festival in Sikhism and Hinduism. It is usually celebrated on April 13 or 14 every year.

Vaisakhi marks the Sikh New Year and commemorates the formation of Khalsa Panth[[98]](#footnote-98) warriors under Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. It is additionally a spring harvest festival for the Sikhs. Vaisakhi is also an ancient festival of Hindus, marking the Solar New Year and also celebrating the spring harvest. It marks the sacredness of rivers in Hindu culture, it is regionally known by many names, but celebrated in broadly similar ways.

Vaisakhi observes major events in the history of Sikhism and the Indian subcontinent that happened in the Punjab region. The significance of Vaisakhi as a major Sikh festival marking the birth of the Sikh order started after the persecution and execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur for refusing to convert to Islam under the orders of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. This triggered the coronation of the tenth Guru of Sikhism and the historic formation of Khalsa, both happening on Vaisakhi day. Vaisakhi was also the day when colonial British empire officials committed the Jallianwala Bagh[[99]](#footnote-99) massacre on a gathering -- an event influential to the Indian movement against colonial rule.

On Vaisakhi, Gurdwaras[[100]](#footnote-100) are decorated and hold kirtans[[101]](#footnote-101). Sikhs visit and bathe in lakes or rivers before visiting local Gurdwaras, community fairs and *nagar kirtan* processions are held, and people gather to socialize and share festive foods.

Early Depiction of Khalsa Panth Sikh Warriors

For many Hindus, the festival is their traditional solar new year, a harvest festival, an occasion to bathe in sacred rivers such as Ganges, Jhelum and Kaveri, visit temples, meet friends and party over festive foods. This festival in Hinduism is known by various regional names.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaisakhi>

## Vasant Panchami (Hinduism)

Vasant Panchami is a festival which falls on the February month of the year and this day is considered as the welcome of spring over winter. On this day, the fields are loaded with yellow mustard and the whole country is delightfully decorated in different shades of yellow flowers and ribbons.

The yellow colour is dominant on this day in the entire nation. Sweet saffron rice is also served.

The most significant aspect of this holy day is it is also the most auspicious day to begin laying one’s foundations of education, reading and writing. Pre-school children are given their first lesson on this day. All Hindu educational institutions conduct special prayers for Saraswati[[102]](#footnote-102) on this day. It is also a great day to inaugurate training institutes and new schools.

Further Reading: <https://www.google.ca/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=when%20is%20basant%20panchami%20in%202017>

# HUMANISM (International Humanist and Ethical Union)

## World Humanist Day

World Humanist Dayis a holiday celebrated annually around the world on the June solstice, which usually falls on June 21st. According to the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), this day is a way of spreading awareness of Humanism as a philosophical life stance and means to effect change in the world. It is also seen as a time for Humanists to gather socially and promote the positive values of Humanism.

**What is Humanism?**

Google defines Humanism as a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives.

Further Reading: <https://www.google.ca/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#safe=strict&q=humanism>

According to the American Humanist Association, Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism and other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

Further Reading: <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/>

**Humanist Association of Toronto (H.A.T.)**

The following is an excerpt from H.A.T.’s Constitution, Section III - *Declaration of Principals*

1. ***Freedom of Inquiry***: Every individual should be free to inquire into any and all areas of thought, to explore, to challenge, question or doubt. Without freedom of inquiry, we lose the ability to improve the human condition.
2. ***The Use of Reason:*** Reason provides a common standard against which we can test our perceptions. Without reason there is no valid tool for making judgments.
3. ***Knowledge:*** The only thing that can be called knowledge is that which is firmly grounded in human understanding and empirical verification. Without human comprehension and verification we lose our connection with the natural world around us.
4. ***Creativity:*** Human creativity is essential to the ability to solve problems, expand knowledge, and fulfill our cultural needs.
5. ***Fallibility:*** Human knowledge and human ethics have changed over time and will continue to change. Without acknowledging fallibility we risk descent into dogma**.**
6. ***The Natural World:*** The physical world is the world in which our ethics must operate, rather than in any imagined Utopian societies or afterlife. Because the physical world is the only one of which we have empirical knowledge, it is irrational to sacrifice benefits in this world for supposed gains in imaginary ones.
7. ***Human Ethics:*** Ethical decisions should be made in the context of real people, real situations, real human needs and aspirations and the consideration of real consequences. Humanism combines personal liberty with social responsibility. It affirms the dignity of every person, the right of the individual to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others, and the need for community. Without this context we risk the worst excesses of ideology.

Further Reading: <http://www.humanisttoronto.ca/>

# ISLAM

## Al-Hijra New Year (Islam)

Al-Hijra is the first day of the Islamic New Year. It also marks the first day of the Islamic month, Muharram. The Islamic calendar has 12 months, each month beginning with the first sighting of a crescent moon. However, because there are many factors affecting when the moon can be seen clearly, the crescent-sightings do not always appear at the same time each year. The date of Al-Hijra must be carefully predicted in advance.

Al-Hijra also celebrates the day the prophet Muhammad began his voyage from Mecca to Medina. This day is usually treated as a time for quiet reflection and thinking of the coming year.

Further Reading: <http://www.religionfacts.com/al-hijra>

## Ashura (Islam)

Ashura begins at sundown. Ashura is a Muslim holy day observed on the 10th day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar. Ashura was first designated in 622 B.C.E[[103]](#footnote-103)., soon after the Hijrah or "migration" of Muslims to Medina, as a day of fasting from sunset to sunset. Soon after, Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting and atonement, became obligatory, leaving the fast of Ashura as a voluntary observance, which it has remained for Sunni Muslims.

For Shi’a Muslims (or followers of Imam Ali), Ashura is a significant day, a ta’ziyah or "funeral," commemorating the death of Imam Ḥusayn, son of Imam Ali and grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), on the 10th of Muḥarram (AH 61;10 October 680 C.E.) in Karbala (now in present day Iraq). As a result, this day is marked with much solemnity, including the wearing of black, the performance of passion plays and pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Husayn in Karbala if possible.

Further Reading: [www.wikidates.org/muslim-holidays/ashura-2016.html](http://www.wikidates.org/muslim-holidays/ashura-2016.html)

## Birthday of Imam Aga Khan (Islam)

Imam Aga Khanis a name used by the [Imam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imam) of the [Nizari Ismailis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nizari_Ismaili) since 1818. The current user of the name is Shah Karim who is the 49th Imam (1957–present), Prince Shah Karim Al Husseini [Aga Khan IV](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aga_Khan_IV) (b. 1936). 12 December is his birthday and celebrated by millions of Shi’a Muslims.

Further Reading: <http://www.akdn.org/about-us/his-highness-aga-khan>

## Eid Al Adha (Islam)

Eid-ul-Adha is celebrated in Dhul Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. This is known as a sacred month within the community. It marks the month of Hajj (or Pilgrimage) an important act of worship for Muslims, where millions of people travel to Mecca to visit the Kabah – the holiest site in Islamic traditions.

During Eid-ul-Adha, which lasts for four days, Muslims remember the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail. In the story Ibrahim was willing to sacrifice his son to show his love and obedience towards God. However, God replaced Ismail with a ram, showing that true trust and faith are rewarded. Hence, Eid-ul Adha is known as the Festival of Sacrifice.

Those performing Hajj return for Eid-ul-Adha, where they traditionally proceed to slaughter a lamb or other suitable animal. The meat is then divided into thirds; one-third is given to those in need, one-third goes to neighbours and friends, and one-third stays with the family. The celebrations typically involve visiting friends and family, sharing in a festive atmosphere, and remembering those who are less fortunate.

Further Reading: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2935046/eid-al-adha-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-muslim-festival-of-sacrifice/>

## Eid al Fitr (Islam)



Eid al Fitr begins at sundown on the first day of Shawwal, the tenth month of the Muslim calendar, and marks the end of the month of Ramadan. On this day, Muslims who have been observing Ramadan break their fast and celebrate its conclusion. Muslims also thank Allah for the help and strength given during Ramadan to help them practice self-control.

The day traditionally begins early with a prayer ceremony at the community mosque. Since this is a day to celebrate the renewal of one’s commitment to Islam, people may wear new clothes as a symbol of fresh beginnings. Families typically visit one another and exchange good wishes, hugs, and handshakes, and homes are often decorated to reflect the festive atmosphere of this special day.

Muslims Enjoy Eid al Fitr Meal

Further Reading: <https://www.al-islam.org/fast-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi/eid-ul-fitr-unique-festival-time-joy-muslims>

## Eid ul Ghadir (Islam)

Eid ul Ghadir or The event of Ghadir Khumm refers to the appointment of [Ali ibn Abi Talib](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_ibn_Abi_Talib) by the Islamic prophet, [Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad), as his successor according to the [Shia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia) beliefs. [Sunnis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunnis), however, do not believe that there was any appointment of a successor by Muhammad in Ghadir Khumm or elsewhere. On February 632, the last year of his life, Muhammad attended [Hajj](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hajj) rituals known as the [farewell pilgrimage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farewell_Pilgrimage). On the 18th [Dhu al-Hijjah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhu_al-Hijjah) and in the way back to [Medina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medina), due to revelation of [the verse of announcement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith_of_the_pond_of_Khumm#The_verse_of_announcement), Muhammad gathered all Muslims and made a speech. The most significant sentence of his remark was: "Whomsoever to him I am master *(Maula)*, Ali is also his/her master *(Maula)*. O God, love those who love him, and be hostile to those who are hostile to him."

Further Reading: <http://en.wikishia.net/view/Eid_al-Ghadir>

## Imamat Day (Islam)

This is a celebration of the Imam of the Day amongst Shia Muslims and to reaffirm the spiritual allegiance to the Imam and commitment to the ethics of the faith. The current Imam is named Mawlana Hazar Imam.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imamat_Day>

## Isra’a and Miraj (Islam)

The Isra’a and Miraj are the two parts of a Night Journey that, according To[Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam), the [prophet of Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophets_and_messengers_in_Islam), [Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) took during a single night around the year 621. It has been described as both a physical and spiritual journey. A brief sketch of the story is in [Surah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surah) [al-Isra’a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Isra) of the [Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran)[[104]](#footnote-104), and other details come from the H[adith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith)[[105]](#footnote-105), collections of the reports of the teachings, deeds and sayings of Muhammad. In the *Isra’a* part of the journey, Muhammad travels on the steed [Buraq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buraq) to "[the farthest mosque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Aqsa_Mosque)" where he leads other prophets in prayer. He then ascends to [heaven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven) in the *Miraj* journey where he speaks to [God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Islam), who gives Muhammad instructions to take back to the faithful regarding the details of prayer. This remembrance of this journey is one of the most significant events in the [Islamic calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_calendar).

Further Reading: <http://islam.about.com/od/otherdays/a/isra-miraj.htm>

## Jalsa Salana (Islam)

Jalsa Salana (Annual Gathering) is the formal, annual gathering of the [Ahmadiyya Muslim Community](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmadiyya_Muslim_Community) initiated by [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirza_Ghulam_Ahmad), founder of the community who claimed to be the [Promised Messiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah) and [Mahdi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahdi) of the end days. Usually, the gathering spans over three days, beginning on Friday after the [Friday Sermon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jumu%27ah). Typically, the [flag hoisting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Standard#Ahmadiyya_flag) ceremony is used to identify its commencement. Although there is a central, international Jalsa attended by Ahmadis from across the world, many of the countries hold their own national Jalsa, sometimes attended by the [Khalifatul Masih](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khalifatul_Masih).

Further Reading: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/**Jalsa**\_**Salana**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jalsa_Salana)

## Jumu’ahtul Wida (Islam)

Jumu'ah is the day on which Muslim men are required to attend (women may attend also, but are not required) a congregation in lieu of the mid-day prayer. Evidence of this congregation found in the Qur'an in Verse 9 of Chapter 62 (The Congregation, Friday):

*O you who have believed, when [the Adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew.*

Though Islam places no specific emphasis on any Friday as a holy day, some Muslims regard this particular Friday as the second holiest day of the month of Ramadan and one of the most important days of the year. Some Muslims spend a large part of their day on Jumu'atul-Wida doing ibadah (obedience with submission).

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jumu'atul-Wida>

## Lailat al Qadr (Islam)

Lailat al-Qadr meaning in English as the Night of Decree, Night of Power, Night of Value, Night of Destiny, or Night of Measures, is in [Islamic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) belief the night when the first verses of the [Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) were revealed to the [Islamic prophet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophets_of_Islam) [Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad). It is one of the odd nights of the last ten days of [Ramadan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramadan) and is better than 1000 months of worship. [Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim) believe that on this night the blessings and mercy of [Allah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allah) are abundant, sins are forgiven, [supplications](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dua) are accepted, and that the [annual decree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predestination_in_Islam#Stages_of_Taqdeer_.28fate.29) is revealed to the [angels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_view_of_angels) who also descend to earth.

Muslims believe that Lailat al-Qadr was the night when the Quran was revealed to Muhammad from [Allah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allah). Most Muslims believe that revelation of the Quran occurred in two phases, with the first phase being the revelation in its entirety on Lailat al-Qadr to the [angel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_view_of_angels) [Gabriel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel#Islam) ([Jibril](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_(Islam)) in Arabic) in the lowest heaven, and then the subsequent verse-by-verse revelation to Muhammad by Gabriel, across 23 years. The revelation started in 610 CE at the [Hira](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hira) cave on Mount Nur in Mecca. The first Sura that was revealed was [Sūrat al-ʿAlaq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Alaq). During the first revelation the first five verses of this Sura, or chapter, were revealed.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laylat_al-Qadr>

## Mawlid-al-Nabi (Islam)

Mawlid al-Nabi (12 Rabi 1): Prophet Muhammad's Birthday. This holiday celebrates the birthday of Muhammad, the founder of Islam. It is fixed as the 12th day of the month of Rabi I in the Islamic calendar. Mawlid means birthday of a holy figure and al-Nabi means prophet.

Further Reading: [www.justask**islam**.com/197/celebrating-**mawlid**-an-**nabi**-is-it-permissible/](http://www.justaskislam.com/197/celebrating-mawlid-an-nabi-is-it-permissible/)

## Nisfu Shabaan (Islam)

The 15th night of Shabaan is a very blessed night. According to the Hadith Shareef, the name of this Mubarak night is "Nisfu Shabaan" which means 15th night of Shabaan. The reason for this special night to attain its name of Laylatul Baraa'ah, meaning the Night of Salvation, Night of Freedom from Azaab, Hellfire and Calamity, is that on this night the Barkah and acceptance of repentance may be accomplished. Laylatul Bara'ah in Persian, as well as in Urdu, is called Shabe Baraat.

Further Reading: <http://www.israinternational.com/knowledge-nexus/445-the-night-of-15th-shabaan-laylatul-baraah-.html>

## Ramadam (Islam)

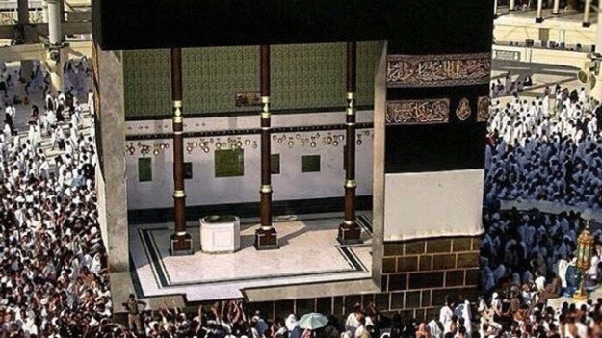
Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is referred to in the Qu’ran (Koran) as a blessed month in which the teachings of the Qu’ran were revealed to the prophet Muhammad. During Ramadan, most Muslims fast during the hours of daylight and also increase their focus on prayer and contemplation. At the end of each day, the fast is traditionally broken with a prayer and a light meal called the iftar.

Ramadan is considered a time for Muslims to recommit themselves to practicing compassion and generosity for others, as well as a time to cultivate spiritual renewal both within themselves and their communities.

Further Reading: [www.**ramadan**-**islam**.org/](http://www.ramadan-islam.org/)

## Waqf al Arafa Hajj (Islam)

For Muslims, Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and occurs during the Islamic Month of Dhul Hijjah. This takes place once a year in the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. During Hajj, Muslims from all around the world gather together in Mecca[[106]](#footnote-106) and stand before the Kabah[[107]](#footnote-107) in praise of Allah. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail are credited with building the Kabah, also known as ‘the House of God.’ Muslims complete their daily prayers by facing the Kabah containing the sacred black stone on its east side[[108]](#footnote-108). The Hajjis (or pilgrims) wear simple white clothes called an Ihram, a symbol of purity, and take part in acts of worship which are meant to renew their focus on their purpose in the world.



A sense of equality is fostered during Hajj, as rich, poor, educated, and illiterate people are all dressed the same and complete the same rituals. Hajj is meant to establish a sense of Islamic brotherhood and sisterhood emphasizing the fact that everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah and therefore all Muslims, despite ethnic group, colour, gender, or social status, are welcome. The journey of Hajj is not meant to be a burden on Muslims, so only those physically and economically able to do so are expected to go at least once in their life. For example, elderly Muslims are not expected to complete Hajj, as it can be a challenging journey for them.

A Look Inside the Kabha – The Sacred Mosque

Further Reading: [https://**en.wikipedia.org**/wiki/Day\_of\_**Arafa**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day_of_Arafa)

# JAINISM

## Daslakshan Parva (Jainism) See Samvatsari - Parva (under Jainism)

## Diwali (Jainism, Hinduism/Sikhism)

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Jains. Diwali celebrates the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. Diwali also signifies many different things to different people. From a cultural perspective, Diwali marks the beginning of the New Year for farmers who plant their crops after Diwali, as well as for business people and merchants who traditionally settle all accounts on this day and begin the new financial year. Everywhere that it is celebrated, it signifies the renewal of life.

***Hindus:*** Diwali is dedicated to the Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. In Bengal, Diwali honours the Goddess Kali[[109]](#footnote-109).

***Sikhs:*** Diwali commemorates the return of the sixth guru (Guru Har Gobind Ji) to the Holy city of Amritsar after his release from detention[[110]](#footnote-110). He had been detained based on the pretext that the fine imposed on Guru Arjan had not been paid by the Sikhs and Guru Hargobind.

Lakshmi: Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity

***Jains:*** Diwali commemorates the passing into Nirvana of Mahavira[[111]](#footnote-111).

To celebrate this joyous and important festival, people congregate with friends and family, exchange gifts of sweets, and greet each other with the words “Subh Diwali” or ”Diwali di vadiyan.” Some set off fireworks and wear new clothes. Many light small clay lamps, called dipas or diyas, candles, and even neon lights.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali_(Jainism)>

## Gyan Panchami (Jainism)

The 5th day after Diwali is known as "Gyan Panchami". It is the fifth day of the fortnight of the waxing moon in Kartik. Gyan Panchami, also known as "Laabh paacham" or "Jnan Panchami", is a Jainism festival.

Gyan Panchami is celebrated as a day of honoring knowledge and the holy books. In Jainism, this day is a time for students and scholars to celebrate Jnana, the divine or transcendent knowledge or wisdom. It is a day of worship of pure knowledge.

Gyan Panchami is the festival celebrated by Jains to recognise the importance of their scriptures. The books preserved in the religious libraries are cleansed and worshipped. Rituals involving books and writing instruments are performed. Prayers are said for guidance to acquire right knowledge.

The temples are lit up. On this day, all the holy books and scriptures are laid out on a table. People perform pooja[[112]](#footnote-112) on the scriptures, and also on blank papers and unsharpened pencils. Many temples distribute these blank papers and pencils. Many Jains fast on this day. They perform Devavandan (offering veneration to the Gods). Holy recitation and meditation (Pratikraman) are also carried out. On this day, many take a vow to fast every month on the fifth day of the fortnight of the waxing moon for five years and five months continuously.

Further Reading: <http://blessingsonthenet.com/indian-festival/festival/id/111/gyan-panchami-festival/>

## Kshamvaani Forgiveness Day (Jainism)

Kshamvaani or "Forgiveness Day" is a day of forgiving and seeking forgiveness for the followers of [Jainism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism). On this sacred day, every member of the Jainism community approaches everyone, irrespective of religion, and begs for forgiveness for all their faults or mistakes, committed either knowingly or unknowingly. Thus relieved of the heavy burden hanging over their head of the sins of yesteryears, they start life afresh, living in peaceful co-existence with others. Indeed, this day is not merely a traditional ritual, but a first step on their path to [liberation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty) or [salvation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation), the final goal of every man's life, according to the teachings of Jainism.

Further Reading: <http://ahymsin.org/main/misc/jaina-festival-of-paryushana-and-forgiveness-kshamavani.html>

## Lokasha Jayanti (Jainism)

Lokasha Jayanti is a time to celebrate scholarly people. This festival honors the 15th century reformer Lonka Saha who founded the Sthanakvasi sect of Janins, opposed to temple worship and the use of idols of any sort.

Further Reading: <http://ucsfspiritcare.org/event/lokashah-jayanti-jainism-2/>

Further Reading: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=wE6v6ahxHi8C&pg=PA309&dq=Lonka+Saha&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjgx82gpqbRAhUKyoMKHe84CjkQ6AEIGjAA#v=onepage&q=Lonka%20Saha&f=false>

## Mahavir Jayanti (Jainism)

Jainism is an ancient religion of India that prescribes a path of non-violence towards all living beings. Its philosophy and practice rely mainly on self-effort to advance the soul up the spiritual ladder to divine consciousness. Any soul that has conquered its own inner enemies and achieved the state of Supreme Being is called "Jina".

Mahavira was a Jainism holy teacher (Tirthankara) and a mathematician who was born in 599 B.C. and who lived for 72 years. He abandoned his home in 569 B.C., attaining omniscience in 557 B.C. and entered into Nirvana in 527 B.C. He was the last Tirthankara, and was considered a great hero.

Mahavira was born of Siddhartha, Raja of Kundalpura, and Queen Trisala, who was known by the name Priya Karni. ‘Maha’ means great and ‘vira’ means a hero. Mahavira was more of a reformer than the founder of the faith, as he revised the Jainism doctrine.

At a young age Mahavira astonished people with his virtuous natures. He was very much interested in meditation and also cultivated the arts of music and literature. Mahavira lived a life of absolute truthfulness, perfect honesty and absolute chastity. He also lived without possessing any property at all.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahavir_Jayanti>

## Muan Agyaras/ Maun Ekadashi (Jainism)

The festival of Maun Agyaras (also known as Maun Ekadashi) is an auspicious Jain festival which falls on the 11th day of the month Magshar (Magshar Sud 11). According to the English calendar, it falls on the 11th of October.

A person who worships this day of Ekadashi with all the rites and rituals every year for a period of 11 years and 11 months is said to achieve salvation.

Read more: <http://www.tattvagyan.com/jain-festivals/maun-ekadashi/>

## New Year Enlightenment of Gautam Swami (Jainism)

The dynamics of philosophy, enlightenment, fasting and rituals govern the religion of Jainism in an era, when greed, violence, crime and revenge rule headlines. The doctrines core of the Jainism faith demonstrates that a much-needed push for personal reflection and correction is required.

For the Jainism faith, the New Year, Mahavir Niravana, celebrates the attainment of enlightenment or nirvana of the founder of Jainism, Lord Mahavira, the 24th Jainism [Tirthankara](https://www.jainworld.com/jainbooks/tirthankar/who.htm)[[113]](#footnote-113). The night of holy beatification[[114]](#footnote-114) coincides with the night of [Diwali.](https://mangosalute.com/salutetheday/diwali-festival-time-when-you-share-happiness-and-prosperity) Perhaps this may be the reason that Jains also celebrate the Festival of Lights, symbolic of enlightenment. The [Jainism New Year](https://mangosalute.com/cards/newyear) starts with Pratipada following the day of Diwali. The Jainism calendar is separate from any other, known as Vira Nirvana Samvat (era), dating back to 15 October 527 BCE.

Further Reading: <https://mangosalute.com/magazine/how-the-jain-faith-ushers-in-the-new-year-with-devotion-and-grace-2>

## Paryushana Parva (Jainism)

Paryushana, celebrated every year either during the month of August or September, is a Jainism festival of great importance, focused on the concepts of forgiveness and self-discipline. It is observed with 8 days of fasting, reflection, repentance, and the recitation of scripture.

Paryushana is a very auspicious festival that advocates the ten cardinal virtues of a human being as defined by Jainism: forgiveness, charity, simplicity, contentment, truthfulness, self-restraint, fasting, detachment, humility and continence[[115]](#footnote-115). During the festival, devotees ask for forgiveness from the people whom they have offended knowingly or unknowingly. People forget their old quarrels and unity is fostered among people.

The word ‘Paryushana’ means to stay in one place, as the festival marks the staying of the monks in one place during the rainy season. People spend the day listening to the statement of the Dharma and meditating. On the last day of the festival, Samvatsari, alms[[116]](#footnote-116) are distributed to the poor.

Further Reading: <http://ejainism.com/paryushan.html>

## Samvatsari – Parva (Jainism)

**Samvatsari** (International Forgiveness Day)is the last day of [Paryushana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paryushana) - the eight or ten day festival of [Jainism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism). It is the holiest day of the [Jainism calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jain_calendar). Many Jains observe a complete fast on this day. The whole day is spent in prayers and contemplation. A yearly, elaborate penitential retreat called Samvatsati [pratikramana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratikramana) is performed on this day. After the pratikramana Jains seek forgiveness from all the creatures of the world who they may have harmed knowingly or unknowingly by uttering the phrase – “[Micchami Dukkadam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micchami_Dukkadam)”, "Khamau Sa" or "Khamat Khamna". As a matter of ritual, they personally greet their friends and relatives. No quarrel or dispute may be carried beyond Samvatsari and letters, telephone calls are made to outstation friends and relatives asking their forgiveness.

Digambar Jains observe the Parva annually for self-purification and uplift. This Parva ultimately leads us to our true destination i.e., salvation. All Digambar Jainism celebrate the Dash Lakshan Parva for ten days; a festival for the observance of ten universal virtues; viz.[[117]](#footnote-117), forgiveness, contentment, and celibacy, which aim at the uplift of the Daslakshan (ten virtues) of Parva

1. Uttama Kshama (Supreme Forgiveness) - To observe tolerance whole-heartedly, shunning anger.
2. Uttama Mardava (Tenderness or Humility) - To observe the virtue of humility subduing vanity and passions.
3. Uttama Aarjava (Straight-forwardness or Honesty) - To practice a deceit-free conduct in life by vanquishing the passion of deception.
4. Uttama Shaucha (Contentment or Purity) - To keep the body, mind and speech pure by discarding greed.
5. Uttama Satya (Truthfulness) - To speak affectionate and just words with a holy intention causing no injury to any living being.
6. Uttama Sanyam (Self-restraint) - To defend all living beings with utmost power in a cosmopolitan spirit abstaining from all the pleasures provided by the five senses - touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing; and the sixth - mind.
7. Uttama Tapa (Penance or Austerities) - To practice austerities putting a check on all worldly allurements.
8. Uttama Tyaga (Renunciation) - To give four fold charities - Ahara (food), Abhaya (fearlessness), Aushadha (medicine), and Shastra Dana (distribution of Holy Scriptures), and to patronize social and religious institutions for self and other uplifts.
9. Uttama Akinchanya (Non-attachment) - To enhance faith in the real self as against non-self i.e., material objects; and to discard internal Parigraha viz. anger and pride; and external Parigraha viz. accumulation of gold, diamonds, and royal treasures.
10. Uttama Brahmacharya (Chastity or celibacy) - To observe the great vow of celibacy; to have devotion for the inner soul and the omniscient Lord; to discard the carnal desires, vulgar fashions, child and old-age marriages, dowry dominated marriages, polygamy, criminal assault on ladies, use of foul and vulgar language.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samvatsari>

# JEHOVAH’S WITNESS

## Memorial to Christ’s Death (Jehovah’s Witness)

The practices of [Jehovah's Witnesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses) are based on the [biblical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible) interpretations of [Charles Taze Russell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Taze_Russell)[[118]](#footnote-118), founder of the [Bible Student movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_Student_movement), and successive presidents of the [Watch Tower Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watch_Tower_Bible_and_Tract_Society_of_Pennsylvania), [Joseph Franklin Rutherford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Franklin_Rutherford) and [Nathan Homer Knorr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathan_Homer_Knorr). Since 1976 they have also been based on decisions made at closed meetings of the religion's [Governing Body](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governing_Body_of_Jehovah%27s_Witnesses). Instructions regarding activities and acceptable behavior are disseminated through [*The Watchtower*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Watchtower)magazine and other [official publications](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses_publications), and at conventions and congregation meetings.

Jehovah's Witnesses endeavor to remain "separate from the world", which is regarded as a place of moral contamination and under the control of [Satan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan), refusing any political and military activity and limiting social contact with non-Witnesses. Members practice a strict moral code, which forbids premarital and homosexual sex, adultery, smoking, alcohol/drug abuse, and blood transfusions. Discipline within congregations is maintained by a system of judicial committees, which have the power to expel members who breach organizational rules and demand their shunning[[119]](#footnote-119) by other Witnesses. The threat of shunning also serves to deter other members from dissident behavior.

Jehovah's Witnesses New World Headquarters, Warwick, N.Y.

Members are expected to participate regularly in evangelizing work and attend all congregation meetings, as well as regular large-scale conventions, which are highly structured and based on material from Watch Tower Society publications.

Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate Christ's death as a ransom or "propitiatory sacrifice" by observing the Lord's Evening Meal, or Memorial. They celebrate it once per year, noting that it was instituted on the [Passover](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover), an annual festival. They observe it on [Nisan 14](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartodeciman) according to the ancient Jewish luni-solar calendar. Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that this is the only celebration the Bible commands Christians to observe.

Further Reading: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/>

# JUDAISM

## Hanukkah (Judaism)

Hanukkah, the Jewish “Festival of Lights,” also known as the “Feast of Dedication,” begins at sunset on the 25th day of the Hebrew month, Kislev. In Judaism, Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days to commemorate the victory of Judah the Maccabee for religious freedom and rededication of the Temple in 165 BCE, and to celebrate the power of God and the faithful members of Judaism. To commemorate the rededication of the temple a menorah[[120]](#footnote-120), the Hanukkah lamp, was lit. The oil was only supposed to last for one day, but it miraculously kept the menorah lit for 8 days. Today, the seven candles of the menorah are lit one day at a time to signify the eight days of light that shone during the first rededication ceremony in 165 BCE. Spinning a dreidel (a spinning top) is traditionally associated with the festival.

The Hanukkah Lamp

Further Reading: <http://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article_cdo/aid/671899/jewish/When-is-Hanukkah-Chanukah-Celebrated-in-2016-and-2017.htm>

## Pentecost (Judaism, Christianity, Eastern Orthodox)

Pentecost is a Christian observance commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus Christ’s disciples, according to the Bible. Many Christians in Canada celebrate Pentecost, which is also known as Pentecost Sunday, Whitsunday, or Whit Sunday.

**What Do People Do?**

Many churches in Canada have special Pentecost services. Bible passages regarding the Holy Spirit’s descent on Jesus’ disciples are read out during the services. Some churches may organize special events, such as Pentecost services at seniors’ residences. Poems and songs dedicated to the Holy Spirit are read out or sung in some churches.

Sunday school activities focus on the events that took place during Pentecost, which is described in the New Testament in the Christian Bible. Activities include puzzles and games, take-home sheets that summarize what students learned in class, stained glass craft, and coloring pages.

Further Reading: <http://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article_cdo/aid/102911/jewish/What-Is-Hanukkah.htm>

## Pesach/Passover (Judaism)

March 30 (at sundown) – March 31, 2018 (first two days of Passover[[121]](#footnote-121))

April 6 (at sundown) - April 7, 2018 (last two days of Passover)

Passover begins at sundown on the first day. Passover, or Pesach, the Jewish Festival of Unleavened Bread (Matzah), commemorates the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. It is celebrated for eight days with special prayers and symbolic foods at home. It is a “festival of freedom” to remind Jews of how God released their ancestors from slavery and brought them to freedom in a Promised Land.

The Seder—the traditional meal held on the first night of this holiday—is often attended by extended families. Also, because charity and community are such important elements of the holiday, it is common for families to invite people to their Seder who, for whatever reason, are not able to have one of their own.

Further Reading: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/holidaya.html>

## Purim (Judaism)

Purim begins at sundown on March 11, 2017. The story of Purim is described in the book of Esther. Esther was a Jewish girl who lived in Persia. Esther was forced to marry a King who ruled a large empire from India to Ethiopia. He had an evil advisor named Hamman who made a plot to deceive the government into murdering all of the Jews in the empire. Queen Esther overheard this plan and revealed Hamman's deceitfulness to the King which saved the Jewish people of Persia from extermination. Esther is celebrated as a great heroine in Jewish history. There are several observances associated with Purim which include:

1) giving charity to the poor;

2) *Mishloach Manot* (this translates to giving gifts of food and drink to friends);

3) enjoying a special meal with family and friends; and,

4) listening to the story of Purim as it is written on a special scroll called the Megillah.

It is customary for children and adults to dress up in costumes and attend carnivals and other enjoyable events on Purim. Purim is also significant as it comes exactly one month before Passover.

Further Reading: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday9.htm>

## Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins at sundown. During this time, many Jews reflect upon the deeds of last year and the need for redemption. Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement and Forgiveness, are the two High Holidays of the Jewish calendar. Children are introduced to the deep religious significance of these holidays through a traditional prayer, a Tashlikh ceremony, folk songs, and animated fables. They learn what the foods associated with these holidays symbolize, the special clothing that is worn, the importance of the Torah and of performing good deeds throughout the year, as well as how to make greeting cards wishing health and happiness.

This is a religious event that is spent reminding Jews of their spiritual needs and to reinforce social relationships. Rosh Hashanah is a time for both celebration and contemplation. Preparing festive meals for family and friends is common, and visiting the graves of deceased family members is also important.

Further Reading: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday2.htm>

## Shavuot (Judaism)

Shavuot (The Festival of Weeks) is a Jewish holiday which begins at sundown on the 5th day of Sivan (late May or early June) and lasts until nightfall on the 7th day of Sivan. Shavuot is celebrated 7 weeks after Passover. Each year, the Jewish people renew their acceptance for God's gift of the Torah, which was originally given to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai over 3,300 years ago. Shavuot also means oath and it is believed that on this day God swore his eternal devotion to the Jewish people and the people pledged their everlasting loyalty to Him.

There are many customs that are specific to the Shavuot holiday. For instance, children and adults will stay up all night reading the Torah on the first night of Shavuot. Work must not take place during the course of Shavuot. Families attend the synagogue on the first day of Shavuot to hear readings of the Ten Commandments. Special meals are eaten during Shavuot especially diary dishes to commemorate the Kosher Laws revealed to the Jewish people upon receiving the Torah.

On the second day of Shavuot, the Yizkor memorial service is recited, and the Book of Ruth is read. Other customs include decorating the homes and synagogues with greenery to acknowledge Shavuot as a harvest holiday, when the first fruits of harvest were brought to the Temple. Candles, flowers, diary delights, religious readings, and spending time with loved ones makes Shavuot one of the most celebrated holidays of the Jewish faith.

Shavuot: The Harvest of Blessings

Further Reading: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidayc.htm>

## Shemini Atzeret (Judaism)

Shemini Atzeret, meaning ''the eighth day of assembly,'' is a Jewish holiday that follows the festival of Sukkot. On this Holy Day, Jewish people are commanded to “hold a solemn gathering; [when] you shall not work at your occupation'' (Numbers 29:35).

Shemini Atzeret marks the beginning of the rainy season following the harvest in Israel. The prayer for rain is the only ritual that is unique to Shemini Atzeret. In ancient times, an offering was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem on Shemini Atzeret. But once the Temple was destroyed, the only Shemini Atzeret ritual that remained was the prayer requesting rain for a plentiful year.

In Israel, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah is celebrated on the same day. However, in the Diaspora, the two holy days are separate, the first being Shemini Atzeret and the second Simchat Torah.

Further Reading: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday6.htm>

## Simchat Torah (Judaism)

Following the seven day festival of Sukkot, comes the two day festival of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah (“Rejoicing of the Torah”). On Simchat Torah people of the Jewish faith conclude, and begin anew, the annual Torah reading cycle. The event is marked with great rejoicing, especially during the ''hakafot'' procession, in which the community marches, sings and dances with the Torah scrolls around the reading table in the synagogue.

Further Reading: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday6.htm>

## Sukkot (Judaism)

The Festival of Sukkot begins on sundown. Sukkot is the last of the Shalosh R'galim (three pilgrimage festivals). Like Passover and Shavu'ot, Sukkot has a dual significance: historical and agricultural. Historically, Sukkot commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Agriculturally, Sukkot is a harvest festival.

The word *Sukkot* or *Sukkah* means ''booths,'' and refers to the temporary dwellings that the Jews resided in during their forty years of wandering after their Exodus from Egypt. During this holiday, Jews construct and reside in the sukkot that they have built near their modern homes.

Example of a Sukkot

Jewish families celebrate this festival by having special prayer services and holiday meals. Traditionally, during each day of the holiday, Jews invite seven spiritual guests into their sukkah (booth). Friends, family, and neighbours are also invited into the sukkot for a snack or meal.

Further Reading: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday5.htm>

## Tishah B’av (Judaism)

Tishah B'av(lit. "the ninth of Av"), is an annual fast day in Judaism which commemorates the anniversary of a number of disasters in Jewish history, primarily the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem.

Tishah B'av is regarded as the saddest day in the Jewish calendar and it is thus believed to be a day which is destined for tragedy. *Tishah B'av* falls in July or August in the [Western calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_calendar).

The observance of the day includes [five prohibitions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tisha_B%27Av#Main_prohibitions), most notable of which is a 25-hour fast. The [Book of Lamentations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Lamentations), which mourns the destruction of Jerusalem is read in the synagogue, followed by the recitation of [*kinnot*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinnot), liturgical [dirges](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dirge) that lament the loss of the Temple and Jerusalem. As the day has become associated with remembrance of other major calamities which have befallen the Jewish people, some *kinnot* also recall events such as the murder of the [Ten Martyrs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Martyrs), [massacres in numerous medieval Jewish communities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhineland_massacres) during the [Crusades](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crusades) and the [Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust).

Further Reading: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidayd.htm>

## Yom HaShoah (Judaism)

Yom Hazikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah "Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day", known colloquially in [Israel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel) and abroad as Yom HaShoah and in English as Holocaust Remembrance Day, or Holocaust Day, is observed as Israel's day of commemoration for the approximately six million Jews who perished in the [Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust) as a result of the actions carried out by [Nazi Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany) and its accessories, and for the [Jewish resistance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_resistance_under_Nazi_rule) in that period. In Israel, it is a national memorial day. It was inaugurated in 1953, anchored by a law signed by the Prime Minister of Israel [David Ben-Gurion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Ben-Gurion) and the President of Israel [Yitzhak Ben-Zvi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yitzhak_Ben-Zvi).

Further Reading: <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/yom-hashoah-holocaust-memorial-day/>

## Yom Kippur (Judaism)



Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, begins this year as the sun sets on September 22, 2015.

Yom Kippur is the tenth and last day of the New Year, the most religious time of the year for many Jews. The High Holy Days, or Days of Awe, are a time both for reflecting on the year passed and for celebrating the year ahead. Many families attend synagogue, praying for peace among nations, among peoples, and within themselves for the coming year.

Yom Kippur: A Festival of Dancing

Yom Kippur is a deeply personal and solemn day, observed by confessing sins and abstaining from food, drink, and work.

Adapted from: Brodd, Jeffrey, *World Religions: A Voyage of Discovery*

Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press, 1998, p. 207)

Further Reading: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm>

# NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (USA)

## International Walk/Bike to School Day

International Walk to School Month gives children, parents, school teachers and community leaders an opportunity to be part of a global event as they celebrate the many benefits of walking. Walkers from around the world walk to school together for various reasons — all hoping to create communities that are safe places to walk.

In 2011, millions of children, parents, and community leaders from 40 countries around the world joined together in celebration of International Walk to School Month in October.

The goal of the walk varies from community to community. Some walks rally for safer and improved streets, some to promote healthier habits and some to conserve the environment. Whatever the reason, International Walk to School events encourage a more walkable world — one community at a time.

Further Reading: <http://www.iwalktoschool.org/>

# NOVA SCOTIA HIGH SCHOOL (Unnamed)

## International Day of Pink (Nova Scotia High School – Unnamed)

Day of Pink is a day of action, created when a youth in a high school in Cambridge, Nova Scotia was bullied because he wore a pink shirt to school. His fellow peers decided to stand up to this bullying, and hundreds of students came to school wearing pink to show support for diversity and stopping discrimination, gender-bullying and homophobia.

The goal of Day of Pink is to bring this message across the world, through an international day of action that anyone can take part in. We encourage groups to not only wear pink in support of diversity, but to also hold events and activities that will engage their community and challenge gender stereotypes.

Across the world, discrimination continues to be the leading source of conflict. Discrimination can take many forms such as: ableism, classism, heterosexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, racism, sexism and transphobia. Stereotypes (ideas) may lead to prejudices (attitudes/feelings), which may lead to discrimination (actions) and affect how we work, study and treat one another. They also create barriers as well as increase bullying, harassment, hate and violence. Day of Pink is more than just a symbol of a shared belief in celebrating diversity - it's also a commitment to being open minded, to being understanding of differences and to learning to respect each other.

Further Reading: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp>

Further Reading: <http://dayofpink.org/>

# ONTARIO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

## Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week (Ontario Provincial Government)

The Ontario Provincial Government has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday of November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week to help promote safe schools and a positive learning environment.

During Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week – November 15-21, 2015 – Ontario students, school staff and parents are encouraged to learn more about bullying and its effect on student learning and well-being.

Bullying is defined as a form of repeated, persistent and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance. Schools are encouraged to use this opportunity to explain the different forms bullying can take.

These include:

* Physical – hitting, shoving, stealing or damaging property
* Verbal – name calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist or homophobic comments
* Social – excluding others from a group or spreading gossip or rumours about them
* Electronic (commonly known as cyberbullying) – spreading rumours and hurtful comments through the use of cellphones, e-mail, text messaging and social networking sites

Further Reading: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/prevention.html>

## Family Day (Ontario Provincial Government)

There is nothing more valuable to families than time together. And yet it seems tougher than ever to find, with so many of us living such busy lives. That's why, on the third Monday of every February Ontarians will have a public holiday: Family Day.

The TDSB's Gender-Based Violence Prevention Office encourages schools to recognize and celebrate diverse families and to raise awareness about the discrimination that many "unconventional" families face.

A family is two or more people, related by blood, marriage, adoption or commitment to care for one another. We know that families are not all the same. Some are traditional, with two parents and biological kids. And many families are unconventional - there are families with one parent, some with more than one or two, and many with same-sex parents; we know that blended families, extended families, adoptive families, foster families and chosen families are also in our communities. We celebrate families which include special friends and neighbours who become part of the family.

Many families cross boundaries of race, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, (dis)ability and language to become families. On this family day create awareness and celebrate!

Family Day Further Reading: <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/faqs/family.php>

Further Reading: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10471&menuid=25649&pageid=22158>

# PLANNED PARENTHOOD/TORONTO PUBLIC HEALTH

## Day Promoting Rights to Sexual Health Education and Sexual Health Care for Youth

(Planned Parenthood Toronto/Toronto Public Health)

According to the Toronto Teen Sex Survey, a project of Planned Parenthood Toronto in collaboration with Toronto Public Health, Toronto teens are sexually active in a variety of ways. Yet, most teens have never accessed clinical sexual health care. Those that have accessed sexual health services are generally unhappy with their care. Eight percent of youth are not getting any sexual health education and there is a disconnect between what youth are learning and what they want to know. Clearly service providers and educators face many barriers to providing adequate sexual health care and sexual health education. February 12 is a day of awareness to begin and continue open discussions and accurate education on healthy sexuality and reproductive choice in a youth-positive and sex-positive way.

Further Reading: <http://www.ppt.on.ca/resources/fact-sheets/>

# PRIDE TORONTO

## LGBTTQQI2S Pride Month Toronto(Pride Toronto)

Canada’s first-ever *Pride Month* was launched on June 1, 2016, (see above for 2017 dates) featuring extended programming and provocative events throughout the city, culminating with the much anticipated annual Pride Parade, July 2 (for 2017). Pride Month will begin with its inaugural city proclamation and the raising of the Rainbow flag at Toronto City Hall, set to occur for the first-time at the beginning of June.

LGBTQ pride or gay pride is the concept that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersexed, and two spirited (LGBTTQQI2S) people should be proud of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The movement has three main premises: that people should be proud of their sexual orientation and gender identity, that diversity is a gift, and that sexual orientation and gender identity are inherent and cannot be intentionally altered. The use of the abbreviated gay pride and pride have since become mainstream and shorthand expressions inclusive of all individuals in various LGBTTQQI2S communities.



The modern "pride" movement began after the "Stonewall riots" in 1969. Instead of backing down to unconstitutional raids by New York City Police, transgender and gay people in local bars fought back. While it was a violent situation it also gave the underground community the first sense of communal pride in a very well publicized incident. From the yearly parade that commemorated the anniversary of the Stonewall riots began a national grassroots movement. Today many countries around the world celebrate LGBTTQQI2S pride. The pride movement has furthered the cause of gay rights by lobbying politicians, registering voters and increasing visibility to educate on issues important to LGBTQ communities. LGBTQ pride advocates work for equal "rights and benefits" for LGBTQ people. As PRIDE has grown in popularity, so has its commercialization and its corporate and government sponsorships. Many in the queer community deeply criticize sponsors' interference with PRIDE's original and intended political roots, and view freedom of expression as central to the event.

Toronto Pride Parade Festivities 2017

Pride Toronto has been in existence in various forms since the late 1970's and annually since 1981. In the early 1970's there were Gay Day picnics that were held at Hanlan's Point, moving later to Cawthra Park, with ceremonies on the steps of the 519 Community Centre, and Pride Toronto's first-ever beer garden. In 1981, police raided various bathhouses that motivated gays and queers and their supporters to organize a major demonstration held at Yonge and Wellesley streets on the day that followed. This event raised public awareness of queer issues - issues intrinsically tied to all social justice movements. In 1984 for the first time Church Street was closed and people danced in the street. Pride Toronto's first Pride Committee was created in 1986, and in 1987 sexual orientation was included in the Human Rights Code. The momentum built up and in 1991 the City Council proclaimed Pride Day for the first time and 80,000 people celebrated. Today over a million spectators annually visit the parade in Toronto.

The first Dyke March (DM) was organized on June 29th 1996 with 5,000 participants. Now a yearly event, the DM is not a parade - it is a grass-roots political demonstration of critical mass; a moment seized to revel in the strength, diversity and passion of LGBTTIQQ2SA women and trans folk that encourages participants to claim and fill the space of the Dyke March with the expression(s) and intention(s) they find most relevant. Summer 2009 saw the first ever Toronto Trans March. This march for visibility, awareness and social change is now a yearly event.

Further Reading: <http://www.pridetoronto.com/about-us/>

# QUEBEC AND FRANCOPHONE CULTURE

## St. Jean Baptiste Day (Quebec and Francophone Culture)

All across Canada, French Canadians express their identity, cultural pride and rich heritage through the celebration of Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day on the 24th of June. Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day began as an ancient celebration of the solstice - "a period of light and hope." It was transformed to a religious feast of the Roman Catholic faithful in Europe honouring St. John the Baptist. It was celebrated in New France on the banks of the St. Lawrence River in the mid 1630's as recounted in the Jesuit Relations and the Journal de Jesuites and has continued on since then! It is a traditional celebration in Quebec honouring the Patron Saint of French Canadians, who was officially proclaimed as such by the Roman Catholic Pontiff, Pope Pius X in 1908.

Today, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day is a statutory holiday in Quebec. Many people call it "La Fête nationale du Québec" or "la fête Saint-Jean." It is celebrated widely throughout the province and beyond recalling its secular, religious and symbolic meaning for French Canadians.

Further Reading: <http://www.republiquelibre.org/cousture/STJEAN2.HTM>

# RASTAFARIAN

## African Liberation Day (Rastafarian)

On 15 April 1958, in [Accra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accra), [Ghana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana), African leaders and political activists gathered at the first [Conference of Independent African States](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Conference_of_Independent_African_States&action=edit&redlink=1). In attendance were representatives of the governments of [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) (then a constituent part of the [United Arab Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Arab_Republic)), [Ethiopia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia), Ghana, [Liberia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberia), [Libya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libya), [Morocco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morocco), [Sudan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudan), [Tunisia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunisia), and the [Union of the Peoples of Cameroon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_the_Peoples_of_Cameroon). This conference was significant in that it represented the first [Pan-African](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-African) conference to be held on African soil.

The Conference called for the founding of African Freedom Day, a day to “mark each year the onward progress of the liberation movement, and to symbolize the determination of the People of Africa to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation.”

Five years later, after the First Conference of Independent African States in the Ethiopian capital [Addis Ababa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addis_Ababa), another historic meeting occurred. On 25 May 1963, leaders of thirty-two independent African states met to form the [Organization of African Unity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_African_Unity) (OAU). By then more than two-thirds of the continent had achieved independence, mostly from imperial European states. At this meeting, the date of Africa Freedom Day was changed from 15 April to 25 May, and Africa Freedom Day was declared African Liberation Day (ALD).

Further Reading: <http://www.aaprp-intl.org/ald>

## Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie (Rastafarian)

Observes the day on which Emperor Haile Selassie I was born in 1892. Nyabingi sessions are held to honour the date.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haile_Selassie>

## Bob Marley’s Earth Day (Rastafarian)

On this day various events and venues that mark the birthday of reggae legend Bob Marley take place. The celebrations cover a two week period, generally in February of each year. During this period, a number of events -- including live shows, a church service and panel discussions on Marley -- will be held.

Widely regarded as the man who introduced reggae to a world audience in the 1970's, Marley was born February 6, 1945 in Nine Miles, St Ann. He died May 23, 1981 in Miami, Florida.

Further Reading: <http://www.africaspeaks.com/reasoning/index.php?topic=2729.0;wap2>

## Bob Marley’s Transformation Day (Rastafarian)

The Pan-African consciousness, progressive political ideologies and deep spiritual convictions heard in Bob Marley’s music were derived from his firmly rooted commitment to Rastafarian beliefs and its attendant lifestyle. “The combination of his own inquisitiveness and the profound depth and influence of the Rastafarian movement transformed Bob Marley into an artist who reshaped reggae music and the course of world history,” says Carlyle McKetty, President of the Brooklyn, NY based Coalition to Preserve Reggae Music. “The intricate relationship between reggae and Rasta is seminal to understanding and preserving the reggae form and Bob Marley’s keen understanding and internalization of the tenets of the Rastafarian movement have yet to be adequately explored.”

Further Reading: <http://www.bobmarley.com/history/>

## Crowning of Emperor Haile Selassie (Rastafarian)

Commemorates the Coronation of Rasta Fari, as Emperor Haile Selassie I, King of Ethiopia in 1930. The high priest reads Biblical passages and initiates the [singing of songs](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/rastafari/customs/music.shtml) to re-emphasize the importance of Haile Selassie as Messiah. A Nyabingi meeting also takes place to remember Haile Selassie.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haile_Selassie>

## Ethiopian Christmas (Rastafarian)

Many Orthodox Christians annually celebrate Christmas Day on or near January 7 to remember Jesus Christ’s birth, described in the Christian Bible. This date works to the [Julian calendar](http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/julian-calendar.html) that pre-dates the [Gregorian calendar](http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/gregorian-calendar.html), which is commonly observed.

Lenten bread.

Nuts and fresh dried fruits.

Vegetables and herbs such as potatoes, peas, and garlic.

Mushroom soup.

Slow-cooked kidney beans with potatoes, garlic and seasoning.

Bobal’ki (small biscuits combined with sauerkraut or poppy seed with honey).

Bowl of honey.

Baked cod.

The type of food and activity may vary depending on the country’s culture and traditions. In some Orthodox Christian cultures, people walk in procession to seas, rivers and lakes as part of the liturgy on the Orthodox Christmas Day. They make holes in the ice to bless the water if it is frozen. Little importance is given to gift exchanges and the commercialized Christmas.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_traditions#Ethiopia_and_Eritrea>

## Ethiopian Constitution Day (Rastafarian)

Commemorates the implementation of Ethiopia's first constitution by Haile Selassie in 1931. The constitution instigated a Parliament and resulted in the appointment of a number of deputies, although Emperor Haile Selassie I retained supreme power and authority. Rastafarians remember the history of Ethiopia and the events that led up to the birth of the Rastafarian religion. A Nyabingi session[[122]](#footnote-122) also occurs to honour the importance of Ethiopia.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1987_Constitution_of_Ethiopia>

## Ethiopian New Year (Rastafarian)

This festival celebrates both the New Year and the Feast of John the Baptist at the end of the long spring rains, when the Highlands are covered with wild flowers. Ethiopian children, clad in brand new clothes, dance through the villages giving bouquets of flowers and painted pictures to each household.

September 11 is both New Year’s Day and the feast of St John the Baptist. The day is called Enkutatash meaning the "gift of jewels." When the famous Queen of Sheba returned from her expensive journey to visit King Solomon in Jerusalem, her chiefs welcomed her back by replenishing her treasury with enku, or jewels. The Spring Festival has been celebrated since these early times and as the rains come to their abrupt end, dancing and singing can be heard at every village in the green countryside. In the evening every house lights a bonfire.

Further Reading: <http://www.awazetours.com/Visit-Ethiopia/Ethiopian-Festivals/New_Year.html>

## Grounation Day (Rastafarian)

Haile Selassie had already met with several Rasta elders in [Addis Ababa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addis_Ababa), and had allowed Rastafari and other [people of African descent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_diaspora) to settle on his personal land in [Shashamane](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shashamane).

Haile Selassie visited [Jamaica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaica) on Thursday, 21 April 1966. Some 100,000 Rastafarians from all over Jamaica descended on [Palisadoes Airport](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palisadoes_Airport) in [Kingston](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingston,_Jamaica), having heard that the man whom they considered to be God was coming to visit them. They waited at the airport playing [drums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drum) and smoking large quantities of [marijuana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannabis_(drug)). Today the Rastafarians celebrate that Haile Selassie visited Jamaica on April 21st.

When Haile Selassie's [Ethiopian Airlines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopian_Airlines) flight landed at the airport at 1:30 PM, the crowd surrounded his plane on the [tarmac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarmac). The day had been overcast and stormy. After about half an hour, the door swung open and the emperor appeared at the top of the mobile steps. A deafening tumult was heard from the crowd, who beat [calabash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calabash) drums, lit firecrackers, waved signs, and sounded [Abeng](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abeng) horns of the [Maroons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maroon_(people)). All protocol was dropped as the crowd pressed past the security forces and onto the [red carpet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_carpet) that had been laid out for the reception. Selassie waved from the top of the steps; some interpreters have claimed that he shed tears, although this is disputed. He then returned into the plane, disappearing for several more minutes. Finally Jamaican authorities were obliged to request Ras [Mortimer Planno](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer_Planner), a well-known Rasta leader, to climb the steps, enter the plane, and negotiate the Emperor's descent. When Planno reemerged, he announced to the crowd: "The Emperor has instructed me to tell you to be calm. Step back and let the Emperor land". After Planno escorted the African monarch down the steps, journalists were puzzled by Selassie's refusal to walk on the red carpet on the way to his limousine. [hence *Grounation*, [Lyric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iyaric) equivalent of *foundation*, "uplifted" with the sound of the word *ground* in the sense of "making contact with the soil"] He was then driven to the [King's House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Official_residence#_Jamaica), the residence of [Governor-General](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governor-General_of_Jamaica) [Clifford Campbell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifford_Campbell).

As a result of Planno's actions, the Jamaican authorities were asked to ensure that Rastafarian representatives were present at all state functions attended by His Majesty, and Rastafarian elders, including Planno and probably [Joseph Hibbert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Hibbert), also obtained a private audience with the Emperor, where he reportedly told them that they should not immigrate to Ethiopia until they had first liberated the people of Jamaica. This dictum came to be known as "[liberation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty) before [repatriation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Repatriation)". At a dinner held at the King's House, Rastas claimed that acting Jamaican Prime Minister [Donald Sangster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Sangster) had stamped his foot at Lulu, Haile Selassie's pet [Chihuahua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chihuahua_(dog)), who, they swore, had responded with the roar of a lion.

Defying expectations of the Jamaican authorities, Selassie never rebuked the Rastafarians for their belief in him as the [Messiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah). Instead, he presented the movement's faithful elders with gold medallions bearing the Ethiopian seal – the only recipients of such an honour on this visit. Meanwhile, he presented some of the Jamaican politicians, including Sangster, with miniature coffin-shaped cigarette boxes.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grounation_Day>

## Marcus Garvey’s Birthday (Rastafarian)

Marcus Garvey was born in St Ann's Bay, Jamaica on 17 August 1887, the youngest of 11 children. At the age of 14 he left school and became a printer's apprentice where he led a strike for higher wages. From 1910 to 1912, Garvey travelled in South and Central America and also visited London. He returned to Jamaica in 1914 and founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). In 1916, Garvey moved to Harlem in New York where UNIA thrived. By now a formidable public speaker, Garvey spoke across America. He urged African-Americans to be proud of their race and return to Africa, their ancestral homeland and attracted thousands of supporters.

To facilitate the return to Africa that he advocated, in 1919 Garvey founded the Black Star Line, to provide transportation to Africa, and the Negro Factories Corporation to encourage black economic independence. Garvey also unsuccessfully tried to persuade the government of Liberia in West Africa to grant land on which black people from America could settle.

Further Reading: <https://www.zapaday.com/page/event/690027-2/Marcus-Garvey>

# SHINTO

## Gantan-sai New Year (Shinto)

Gantan-sai is a Shinto[[123]](#footnote-123) New Year festival observed with prayers for inner renewal. The holiday lasts seven days during which some Japanese people wear their best clothes and visit shrines to pray for good health and prosperity. They also pay visits to the homes of friends to offer good wishes.

Further Reading: <http://www.123newyear.com/holidays/gantan-sai/>

## Setsubun-sai (Shinto)

Setsubun-sai is a Shinto celebration based on the lunar calendar and celebrated primarily in Japan. Historically, it was considered the start of the New Year. Setsubun-sai is a festival of good luck and marks the change of season, from winter to spring and is celebrated for this reason.

During Setsubun-sai, people participate in mame-maki, (bean scattering). Beans are scattered to ward off evil spirits and to welcome good fortune for the New Year.

Further Reading: <http://www.tsurugaoka-hachimangu.jp/whats_new/2016/0218349.html>

# SIKHISM

## Bandi Chhor Divas (Sikhism)

Bandi Chhor (Shodh, Chhor) Divas ("Day of Liberation") is a [Sikh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism) festival which coincides with the day of [Diwali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali). Bandi Chhor Divas celebrates the release from prison in [Gwalior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwalior) of the Sixth Guru, [Guru Hargobind](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Hargobind), and 52 other princes with him. This day is known as *Bandi Chhor Divas*.

The word "Bandi" is translated from [Punjabi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjabi_language) into [English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) as "Imprisoned" (or "Prisoner"); the Hindi word "Chhor" (shodh) translates as "Release," and the Punjabi word "Divas" means "Day", rendering "Bandi Chhor Divas" into English as "Prisoners' Release Day". [Guru Amar Das](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Amar_Das) chose Diwali, later referenced as *Bandi Chhor Divas*, as one of the three festivals to be celebrated by Sikhs, the others being [Maghi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maghi) and [Baisakhi (or Vaisakhi)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaisakhi).

In the Sikh struggle for freedom from the oppressive [Mughal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_Empire) regime, the festival of Bandi Shor (Shodh) Divas became the second most important day after the annual Vaisakhi festival in April. In addition to *Nagar keertan* (a street procession) and an *Akhand Paath* (a continuous reading of Guru Granth Sahib), Bandi Shor (Shodh) Divas is celebrated with a fireworks display. The [Golden Temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harmandir_Sahib), as well as the whole complex, is festooned with thousands of shimmering lights, creating a unique jewel box effect.

Artist’s Rendition of the Release from Prison of Guru Hargobind

Further Reading: <http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Bandi_Chhorh_Divas>

## Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (Sikhism)

Guru Gobind Singh; born Gobind Rai; 22 December 1666 – 7 October 1708), was the 10th Sikh Guru, a [spiritual master](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirituality), [warrior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrior), [poet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poet) and [philosopher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher). He succeeded his father, [Guru Tegh Bahadur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Tegh_Bahadur), as the leader of the [Sikhs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhs) at the young age of nine and became the last of the living [Sikh Gurus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikh_Gurus). He died without [lineal descendant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lineal_descendant) after the [martyrdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyrdom_in_Sikhism) of his four sons during his lifetime. Among his notable contributions to [Sikhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism) are founding the [*Sikh*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikh)[*Khalsa*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khalsa)in 1699,introducing [*the Five Ks*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Five_Ks), the five articles of faith that Khalsa Sikhs wear at all times, contributing to the continual formalization of the religion which the first Guru, [Guru Nanak](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Nanak), had founded in the 15th century and passing the final Guruship of the Sikhs to the Eleventh and Eternal Sikh Guru, the[Guru Granth Sahib Ji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Granth_Sahib_Ji) which, in fact, is a book, a compilation of the wisdom of the preceding nine Sikh Gurus as well as the philosophic renderings of others.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Gobind_Singh>

Further Reading: <http://www.drikpanchang.com/calendars/indian/sikh-festivals/jayanti/guru-gobind-jayanti-date.html?year=2017>

## Birthday of Guru Nanak (Sikhism)

The birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib, founder of the Sikh religion, is celebrated this year on November 14. It is the most important Gurpurab (celebration of Sikh gurus) in the Sikh religious community. Born in 1469 CE in the province of Punjab, India, Nanak sought to heal the divide between Hindus and Muslims. Nanak expressed a message of love and harmony for all of humanity and worked to promote equality between men and women. For his followers, his birthday marks a time of rededication to humanitarian ideals and acts.

Guru Nanak founded and formalized the three pillars of the Sikh religion:

* Naam Japna (meditation on God through reciting, chanting, singing and constant remembrance)
* Kirat Karna (live as honourable householders and earn an honest living through ones’ physical and mental efforts while accepting both pains and pleasures as God’s gifts and blessings)
* Vand Chakna (sharing one’s wealth with the community. Sikhs are expected to take part in Seva, Volunteer work, and to donate one-tenth of their earnings to charity)

Guru Nanak’s contributions to humanity were:

* Equality of humans
* Equity or women
* Universal Message for all people

The time leading up to this date is traditionally filled with prayers, hymns, and chants in praise of the Guru. On the day of the festival, the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book) is decorated with flowers and carried in a procession. This is usually accompanied by religious music and the celebratory sounds of the dholak (folk drum). This procession is then often followed by the langar, a free community lunch offered in the spirit of seva (service) and bhakti (devotion). In the evening, many people illuminate their homes with lamps and candles.

Further Reading: [www.officeholidays.com/countries/india/guru\_nanak.php](http://www.officeholidays.com/countries/india/guru_nanak.php)

## Diwali (Sikhism)

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Jainisms. Diwali celebrates the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. Diwali also signifies many different things to different people. From a cultural perspective, Diwali marks the beginning of the new year for farmers who plant their crops after Diwali, as well as for business people and merchants who traditionally settle all accounts on this day and begin the new financial year. Everywhere that it is celebrated, it signifies the renewal of life.

***Hindus:*** Diwali is dedicated to the Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. In Bengal, Diwali honours the Goddess Kali.

***Sikhs:*** Diwali commemorates the return of the sixth guru (Guru Har Gobind Ji) to the Holy city of Amritsar after his release from detention.

***Jainisms:*** Diwali commemorates the passing into Nirvana of Mahavira. To celebrate this joyous and important festival, people congregate with friends and family, exchange gifts of sweets, and greet each other with the words “Subh Diwali” or ”Diwali di vadiyan.” Some set off fireworks and wear new clothes. Many light small clay lamps, called dipas or diyas, candles, and even neon lights.

Further Reading: <http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Diwali>

## Holla Mohalla (Sikhism)

Holla Mahalla also Hola Mohalla or simply Hola) is a one day [Sikh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikh) festival which takes place on the second day of the [lunar month](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_month) of [Chett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chet_(month))) (a day after Holi which is a two day festival starting with [Holika Dahan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holika_Dahan) on the last day of the lunar month of Phagan on full moon and the actual day of [Holi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holi) the next day on the first day of [Chett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chet_(month))) and most often falls in March, and sometimes coincides with the Sikh [New Year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Year).

The fair held at Anandpur Sahib is traditionally a three day event but participants attend Anandpur Sahib for a week, camping out and enjoying various displays of fighting prowess and bravery, and listening to [kirtan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirtan), music, and poetry. For meals, which are an integral part of the Sikh institution (Gurdwara), visitors sit together in *Pangats* (Queues) and eat vegetarian food of the [Langars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langar_(Sikhism)). The event concludes on the day of Holla Mohalla with a long, military-style procession near [Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takht_Sri_Keshgarh_Sahib), one of the five seats of temporal authority of the Sikhs.

Further Reading: [www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Hola\_Mahalla](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Hola_Mahalla)

## Installation of the Guru Granth as Guru (Sikhism)

[Guru Gobind Singh](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Gobind_Singh) installed this expanded version of the Adi Granth as Guru on [October 20](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/October_20), [1708](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/1708). This day is celebrated today as [Guru Gadi Divas](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Gadi_Divas) (Enthronement Day). At the time of his death, he declared that the Word of God embodied in the Siri Guru Granth Sahib was to be Guru for all time. He said, "O Beloved Khalsa, let any who desire to behold me, behold the Guru Granth. Obey the Granth Sahib, for it is the visible body of the Guru. Let any who desire to meet me, diligently search its Bani." Thus the Word of God, which has manifested as Guru in Nanak, and had passed through the ten incarnations of Guru, was now returned to its form as the Word, the Bani, the Shabad.

The Guru Granth as Guru. The text containing all the wisdom of the Sikh Gurus as well as other philosophers

Further Reading: <https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Granth_Sahib>

## Installation of the Holy Scriptures of Guru Granth Sahib (Sikhism)

The Guru Granth Sahib Ji was compiled by the fifth Sikh Guru, Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji in 1604. He himself was a prolific writer. He collected and edited the compositions of his predecessor Gurus including his own and the compositions of Hindu and Muslim saints, giving equal status to men of God in creating the Granth (Holy Scripture).

The Sikh Gurus preserved the contents of the holy Granth in its original and authentic form which makes it stand distinct from other scriptures.

In 1708 Sri Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last living Guru, proclaimed the *Granth* as the Guru (see above). The Sikh Holy Scripture henceforth is the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. It is an unique phenomena in religious history to have a Holy Scripture as a Guru. Comprising 1,430 pages of hymns, its central message emphasizes the integration of the spiritual and temporal life, not the negation of it.

In Sikhism the word Guru is used only for ten prophet-preceptors, Sri Guru Nanak to Sri Guru Gobind Singh and for none other. No living person, however holy or revered, can have the title or status of Guru.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is treated like royalty and is given absolute reverence. All Sikh community meetings are held in the presence and authority of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, providing a spiritual focus. Every Sikh function, be it birth, death, marriage or initiation ceremony, or the congregation in mindful prayer, requires the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. It presides like a king sitting on a throne.

Singly or in groups in their homes or in congregation in their places of worship Sikhs conclude their prayer with an Ardas (supplication). Ardas is followed by recitation of these words of Guru Gobind Singh:

*“By command of the Timeless Creator was the Panth (God abiding congregation) promulgated. All Sikhs are hereby charged to own the Granth as their Guru. Know the Guru Granth to be the teachings of the Gurus. They who seek to meet the Lord in the ‘Word’ as manifested in the Holy Scripture shall they discover Him”.*

Further Reading: <http://www.faithvictoria.org.au/news-a-articles/296-holy-day-sikh-sri-guru-granth-sahib-ji>

## Maghi (Sikhism)

Maghi is the occasion when Sikhs commemorate the sacrifice of forty Sikhs, who fought for Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Maghi, Makara Sankranti, the first day of the month of Magh. The eve of Maghi is the common Indian festival of Lohri when bonfires are lit in Hindu homes to greet the birth of sons in the families and alms are distributed. In the morning, people go out for an early-hour dip in nearby tanks. For Sikhs, Maghi means primarily the festival at Muktsar, a district town of the Punjab, in commemoration of the heroic fight of the Chali Mukte, literally, the Forty Liberated Ones, who laid down their lives warding off an attack by an imperial army marching in pursuit of Guru Gobind Singh. The action took place near a pool of water, Khidrane di Dhab, on 29 December 1705. The bodies were cremated the following day, the first of Maghi (hence the name of the festival), which now falls usually on the 13th of January. Following the custom of the Sikhs to observe their anniversaries of happy and tragic events alike, Maghi is celebrated with end-to-end recital of the Guru Granth Sahib and religious divans in almost all gurdwaras (Sikh temples).

Further Reading: <https://www.allaboutsikhs.com/sikh-festivals/the-sikh-festivals-maghi>

## Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji (Sikhism)

On [16 June](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/16_June) [1606](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/1606), the [Mughal](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Mughal) [Emperor Jahangir](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Emperor_Jahangir) ordered that [Guru Arjan](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Arjan) Dev Ji, the fifth [Sikh Guru](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikh_Guru) be tortured and sentenced to death after the Guru had refused to stop preaching his message of God as started by [Guru Nanak](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Nanak) Dev Ji. The Guru was made to sit on a burning hot sheet while boiling hot sand was poured over his body. After enduring five days of unrelenting torture, Guru Arjan Dev Ji was taken for a bath in the river. As thousands watched he entered the river, never to be seen again.

Accordingly, on the [16 of June](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/16_of_June) of every year since [1606](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/1606), the [Sikhs](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikh) commemorate the martyrdom of [Guru Arjan](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Arjan) Dev Ji, the fifth Guru and the first Sikh Martyr. Before the arrest, torture, and martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the [Sikhs](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikh) had nothing to do with weapons or violence, as all the [Sikh Gurus](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikh_Gurus) had taught the message of compassion, love, dedication, hard work, worship of one God, and the commitment to peace and harmony for all the peoples of the world. Guru Arjan Dev Ji sowed the seed of martyrdom, which became the heritage of the Sikhs.

Further Reading: <http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Martyrdom_of_Guru_Arjan#Memorial>

## Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (Sikhism)

In 1675 the Islam was the predominate religion in the area where the [Kashmiri Pandits](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Kashmiri_Pandits) (of Hindu faith) lived. The Islamic religion was threatening these people with death if they did not convert to Islam. The Pandits asked for the assistance of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Guru Bahadur was taken into custody by Nur Muhammad Khan Miraza of [Ropar](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Ropar) Police post. In the summer of 1675, the Guru, along with some of his companions were brought to Delhi and asked to convert to Islam or else face the penalty of death. Guru Ji was also asked to perform a miracle. [Guru Tegh Bahadur](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Tegh_Bahadur) averred that he would rather sacrifice his life than give up his faith and his freedom or belief or perform a miracle. He was beheaded on 24 November 1675.

The exact location of the beheading is marked by [Gurdwara Sis Ganj](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Gurdwara_Sis_Ganj) in Delhi. His martyrdom was yet another challenge to the Sikh conscience. It was then realized that there could be no understanding between an insensate power imbued with blood of a proud people wedded to a life of peace with honour. The sacrifice roused the Hindus from their passive silence and gave them the fortitude to understand the power that comes from self-respect and sacrifice. Guru Tegh Bahadur thus earned the affectionate title of "Hind-di-Chadar" or the Shield of India.

Further Reading: <http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Martyrdom_of_Guru_Tegh_Bahadur>

## Prakash (Sikhism)

Prakash is a [Punjabi](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Punjabi) word meaning "light, radiance, awakening, enlightenment" and is also the name given to the ceremony for the "act of bringing the [Sri Guru Granth Sahib](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sri_Guru_Granth_Sahib) from the [Sachkhand](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sachkhand) to the [Darbar hall](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Darbar_hall)". This is normally done at about dawn time every day at all [Sikh](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikh) [Gurdwaras](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Gurdwara) (Sikh Temples).

The Guru Granth Sahib is a large volume and usually stored overnight in one location called the [Sachkhand](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sachkhand) and is like a special bedroom. However, during the day, the Guru Granth Sahib is seated on a raised stage ([Palki Sahib](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Palki_Sahib)) as the focal point in a congregation or [Gurdwara](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Gurdwara). When being brought to the open court it is carried on ones head to symbolize that it is above human ego. This is done while chanting of sacred [Mantars](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Mantar) (Mantras). The prakash process is completed by taking a [hukam](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Hukam) (command or order).

Further Reading: <http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Prakash>

## Vaisakhi Sikh New Year (Sikhism)

Vaisakhi, the Sikh New Year, is celebrated in March or April every year. Vaisakhi is also celebrated in some parts of India, particularly in some of the northern and eastern states.

Vaisakhi marks the time for harvest of the rabi crop and is celebrated by performing bhangra and gidda dances in Punjab. Sikhs celebrate Baisakhi to mark the foundation of Khalsa Panth by the Tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. It is at this time that Guru Gobind Singh gave the Khalsa order the five distinct symbols of purity and courage which would make Sikhs identifiable: the Kesh (unshorn hair); Kangha (the wooden comb); Karra (the iron bracelet); Kirpan (the sword); and Kachera (underclothing). On the same day the guru administered amrit (nectar) to his first batch of five disciples making them Singhs, a martial community. By doing so, he eliminated the differences of high and low and established that all human beings were equal.

Some of the ways that this day is traditionally honoured include visiting a place of worship; participating in a mela (fair); indulging in mithai (sweets), fruits, and lassi (a sweet yogurt drink); and taking a ritual bath of renewal.

Further Reading: [www.**sikhism**guide.org/**vaisakhi**.aspx](http://www.sikhismguide.org/vaisakhi.aspx)

# TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## Body Confidence Awareness Week

Whereas, the Board's 2006 Student Census Report highlighted discrimination on the basis of body image was the highest form of harassment reported in Grades 7 and 8; and

Whereas, the trend of body-based harassment also permeated high school with 27% of students in Grades 9 to 12 reporting being treated negatively based on other peoples' perceptions of their bodies; and

Whereas the Board's 2011 Student Census Report demonstrated only 58% of students in Grades 9 through 12 and 67% in Grades 7 and 8 said they liked how they looked; and

Whereas, lack of body confidence awareness in students leads to developing eating disorders, toxic environments of body-shaming, unhealthy relationships (i.e. relational aggression and increased risk of violence in platonic and intimate relationships), skin-bleaching, shadeism and harassment based on body size and other physical appearance-based bodily features; and

Whereas, all students have the right to learn and thrive socially, emotionally and academically in a safe and caring school environment that is conducive to optimal performance and student success without fear of discrimination based on their appearance;

Therefore, be it resolved that Body Confidence Awareness Week be recognized throughout the Toronto District School Board annually every second week in the month of October.

The motion was carried.

Source: G03(r:\secretariat\staff\g04\01\170419.doc)sec.1530

## World Sickle Cell Day

The international awareness day is observed annually in an attempt to increase public knowledge and an understanding of sickle cell disease, while educating those who may not know enough about the struggles experienced by patients and their families and caregivers.

Sickle cell disease patients have red blood cells that are hard, sticky and C-shaped (like the farm tool, a “sickle), and the potentially-fatal rare genetic condition affects an estimated 95,000 Americans – both adults and children. The misshapen sickle cells clog smaller blood vessels, result in excruciating pain and put patients at an increased risk for infection acute chest syndrome and stroke.

Further Reading: http://www.raredr.com/news/world-sickle-cell-day

## Day of Remembrance: Yonge Street Van Attack

Following the events of that tragic day, the Toronto District Board of Trustees approved that April 23 of each year, or the nearest school day to that date, to be memorialized as a Day of Remembrance for the victims of this tragic incident.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toronto_van_attack>

# TORONTO INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS (TIGP)

## Intergenerational Day (TIGP)

Toronto Intergenerational Partnerships (TIGP) first came into existence in 1981 as a working group in Toronto’s Riverdale community, responding to the needs of two distinct groups – children and youth, and seniors.

A survey of area schools, community agencies and organizations serving seniors showed the need for social contact and activation for isolated seniors and the need of children and youth, with little extended family, to have regular contact and access to the skills and knowledge of seniors living in their community. In response to the survey, TIGP took the lead in coordinating and developing intergenerational support through a variety of programs and activities.

Since 1986, TIGP has been the only non-profit charity mandated and funded to bringing generations and communities together through intergenerational programming across the GTA.

Rooted in community throughout its history, TIGP’s work has been an important volunteer and programming resource in mobilizing and bringing value to the contributions of children, youth and seniors.

Since our inception, our service delivery model has been the provision of services within strong, equitable and formal partnerships with a variety of organizations. Within our partnerships we offer support, resources, skills and knowledge specific to the development of successful intergenerational programs and activities. Our community is made up of people of all ages - seniors, adults, children and youth.

Further Reading: <http://www.tigp.org/about/history>

# TORONTO MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

## Lord Simcoe Day/Founder’s Day (Toronto Municipal Government Civic Holiday)

The Civic Holiday is a holiday observed in most provinces and territories on the first Monday of August. In Ontario individual municipalities have differing names for this holiday (e.g., Simcoe Day, Toronto; John Galt Day, Guelph; Colonel By Day, Ottawa). The holiday has various names from Civic Holiday in other parts of Canada (in Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and in Nova Scotia), Heritage Day (Alberta), Natal Day (in parts of Nova Scotia), New Brunswick Day, Saskatchewan Day, British Columbia Day. Quebec, Yukon, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador do not have this mid-summer holiday.

The mid-summer holiday is a statutory provincial or territorial holiday in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The first 3 listed have their provincial birthday parties on the day. In Northwest Territories and Nunavut it is a holiday for citizens. It is not a statutory holiday in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta but is commonly observed by all levels of government, financial institutions and some businesses.

Lord Simcoe

Further Reading: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic\_Holi**day**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic_Holiday)

# UKRAINIAN CANADIAN CONGRESS

## National Holodomor Memorial Day (Ukrainian Canadian Congress) Fourth Friday in November for schools

A great many genocides and other terrible atrocities have occurred during the twentieth century.

Today, we commemorate the Holodomor, the Ukrainian Genocide of the 1930's. The word   
‘Holodomor’ means murder by starvation. At least 4 million men, women and children starved to death in Ukraine during the artificial famine created by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin; 30% of them were children under ten years of age.

Stalin destroyed the Ukrainian church; he deliberately murdered or deported Ukrainian intellectual, educational, cultural and religious leaders and then finally destroyed the independent Ukrainian farmers. Through a harsh policy of collectivization, all privately owned land and equipment was confiscated, and Ukrainian farmers were forced to work on collective farms.

Secret Police and Red Army units were sent to villages to gather the unreasonably high grain quotas set by the Communist regime. They collected not only the grain but also all of the food found in the homes of many villagers. The Soviet police and soldiers executed and deported anyone who tried to obtain food and punished those who attempted to flee.

This genocide is unique in that food (or its lack) was used as a weapon to destroy the population of a country. Few accounts of the Ukrainian Genocide ever reached the West; reports that filtered through were ridiculed or ignored. The Soviet government repeatedly denied the existence of any famine in Ukraine while millions were dying and for decades afterwards.

Symbol of the Holodomor Genocide

This tragic event is commemorated on the fourth Friday in November for schools. The Toronto District School Board, along with the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario and the Ukrainian Canadian community want all of us to remember this terrible genocide in the hope that similar events will never happen again.

National Holodomor Education Committee

Ukrainian Canadian Congress.   
Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodomor>

# UNITED NATIONS

## Earth Day (United Nations)

Forty plus years after the first Earth Day, the world is in greater peril than ever. While climate change is the greatest challenge of our time, it also presents the best opportunity – an unprecedented opportunity to build a healthy, prosperous, clean energy economy now and for the future. Earth Day can be a turning point to advance climate policy, energy efficiency, renewable energy and green jobs. Earth Day Network is exciting millions to make personal commitments to sustainability. It is a pivotal opportunity for individuals, corporations and governments to join together and create a global green economy. Join the more than one billion people in 190 countries that are taking action for Earth Day.

Further Reading: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/**Earth**\_**Day**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Day)

## Human Rights Day (United Nations)

Human Rights Day is observed by the international community every year on December 10th. It commemorates the day in 1948, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). With more than 360 languages within the UN and its affiliated organizations, this day can be used as an opportunity to focus on helping people everywhere to learn about their human rights. The UDHR was the first international recognition that all human beings have fundamental rights and freedoms and it continues to be a living and relevant document today.

A discussion or activity about the value of human rights can take place in the classroom. Students can also become aware of how human rights are denied around the world, and the results of this.

Adapted from UN Human Rights <http://www.un.org/en/rights/>

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Rights_Day>

## International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (United Nations)

In 1987, the UN General Assembly decided to observe the 26th of June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. As an expression of its determination to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse. In the words of Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, "Illicit drugs destroy innumerable individual lives and undermine our societies. Confronting the illicit trade in drugs and its effects remains a major challenge for the international community." The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) leads the international campaign aimed at raising awareness of the major problem that illicit drugs represent to society and especially to young people. The goal is to inspire people and mobilize support for drug control. The international campaign "Do drugs control your life? Your life. Your community. No place for drugs" communicates that the destructive effects of illicit drugs concern us all. Their use harms individuals, families and society at large. Drugs control the body and mind of individual consumers. The drug crop and drug cartels control farmers, trafficking and crime control communities. Teenagers and young adults are particularly vulnerable to using illicit drugs. The prevalence of drug use among young people is more than twice as high as that among the general population. At this age, peer pressure to experiment with illicit drugs can be strong and self-esteem is often low. Also, those who take drugs tend to be either misinformed or insufficiently aware of the health risks involved.

Adapted from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Website:

[*http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/26-June.html*](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/26-June.html)

Further Reading: [*http://days.tigweb.org/71*](http://days.tigweb.org/71)

## International Day for Literacy (United Nations)

Literacy and Peace:

"Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. It is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives. For individuals, families, and societies alike, it is an instrument of empowerment to improve one’s health, one’s income, and one’s relationship with the world.

The uses of literacy for the exchange of knowledge are constantly evolving, along with advances in technology. From the Internet to text messaging, the ever-wider availability of communication makes for greater social and political participation. A literate community is a dynamic community, one that exchanges ideas and engages in debate. Illiteracy, however, is an obstacle to a better quality of life, and can even breed exclusion and violence."

Further Reading: [*http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/*](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/)

## International Day for Older Persons (United Nations)

"*A society for all ages encompasses the goal of providing older persons with the opportunity to continue contributing to society. To work towards this goal, it is necessary to remove whatever excludes or discriminates against them."*

~Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002)

The United Nations General Assembly designated the 1st of October as the International Day of Older Persons. The day focuses on the empowerment of older persons, paying special attention to their inclusion and participation in society as well as the promotion of a positive image of ageing.

Adapted from: [*http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/index.shtml*](http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/index.shtml)

***Ageism:*** prejudice or discrimination against a particular age-group, especially the elderly and young people.

Source: [*Merriam-Website Online Dictionary*](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ageism)

***Discrimination:*** It may arise as a result of direct differential treatment or the failure to accommodate special needs by treating everyone the same way. If the effect of the behaviour on the individual is to withhold or limit full, equal, and meaningful access to goods, services, facilities, employment, housing, accommodation, it is discrimination.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Day_of_Older_Persons>

## International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (United Nations)

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery celebrates the anniversary of the 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Others. Experts estimate that today there are 27 million people enslaved around the world, approximately 80% of them are women and children. Despite slavery being banned in most countries, it is still practiced in many and affects people despite age, sex, and race.

Today, slavery takes on many different forms including child labour, the use of child soldiers, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, and the trafficking of persons. Schools should acknowledge this day through a variety of activities that promote learning and understanding among students and staff surrounding the complexities of modern day slavery.

Further Reading: <http://www.un.org/en/events/slaveryabolitionday/>

## International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (United Nations)

In 1979, the General Assembly adopted a program of activities to be undertaken during the second half of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. On this occasion, the General Assembly decided that a week of solidarity with the peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination, beginning on 21 March, would be organized annually.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21, commemorates the anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and falls at the beginning of this week of solidarity. On that day in South Africa, peaceful demonstrators against apartheid were killed. In 1966, the United Nations declared that each year on March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination should be observed as a symbol of the worldwide need to end racism.

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/world-day-eliminate-racial-discrimination>

## International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (United Nations)

The United Nations General Assembly designated November 25th as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and invited governments, international organizations and NGOs to organize activities designated to raise public awareness and take action to prevent violence towards women. This date originates from the brutal assassination of the three Mirabal sisters in 1960 who were political activists in the Dominican Republic. Their assassination was committed on orders from the Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961).

Women all over the world are inflicted by violence in various forms, including physical, sexual, economic, and psychological. The aftermath of such violence can be detrimental towards ones’ health, ones’ ability to be active in society, and can cause lifelong damages. A staggering 70 percent of women across the globe are, or have, suffered from some form of violence in their lifetime.

Such violence does not discriminate by culture, age, or region – it can happen anywhere, to anyone. Discrimination towards women is the root cause of such violence, and it is our responsibility to eradicate such prejudice and try to prevent further violence towards innocent women all over the world.

As stated by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon “We must unite. Violence against women cannot be tolerated in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any government”.

Further Reading: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp>

Further Reading: <http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/resources.shtml>

## International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (United Nations)

In 1992, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared October 17th as the “Day for the Eradication of Poverty.” This day aims to promote awareness of the need to eliminate poverty and destitution in all countries.

Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General at the time, stated, “So long as every fifth inhabitant of our planet lives in absolute poverty, there can be no real stability in the world.”

The devastating effects of poverty can be seen through the erosion of healthy development in individuals and communities. Poverty leads to inadequate standards of health, unsanitary housing, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, social exclusion, and illiteracy. Throughout the world, the majority of people who live in poverty are women, children, and the elderly.

During the ten years between 1996 and 2006, the United Nations honoured the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, with the goal of reducing absolute poverty and overall global poverty through decisive national action and international co-operation. According to the Human Development Report, the eradication of poverty is a feasible and affordable goal.

Educators and school communities often confront the deleterious effect of poverty on a daily basis within our classrooms. Although this can be overwhelming, schools can educate and inspire students to work toward transforming the conditions and attitudes that impoverish millions of people around the world. A solution is possible.

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/international-day-for-poverty-eradication>

## International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition (United Nations)

The United Nations’ (United Nations) International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is annually observed on August 23 to remind people of the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade. It gives people a chance to think about the historic causes, the methods and the consequences of slave trade.

In late August, 1791, an uprising began in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) that would have a major effect on abolishing the transatlantic slave trade. The slave rebellion in the area weakened the Caribbean colonial system, sparking an uprising that led to abolishing slavery and giving the island its independence. It marked the beginning of the destruction of the slavery system, the slave trade and colonialism.

People from all over the world, including educators, students and artists, are encouraged to organize events that center on the theme of this day. Theatre companies, cultural organizations, musicians and artists take part on this day by expressing their resistance against slavery through performances that involve music, dance and drama. Educators promote the day by informing people about the historical events associated with slave trade, the consequences of slave trade, and to promote tolerance and human rights. Many organizations, including youth associations, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations, actively take part in the event to educate society about the negative consequences of slave trade.

Further Reading: [www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/)

## International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (United Nations)

Torture aims to take away the victim’s personality and their dignity. The United Nations has condemned torture by human beings on their fellow human beings.

Torture is a crime under international law. It is absolutely prohibited and cannot be justified under any circumstances. The systematic or widespread practice of torture constitutes a crime against humanity.

On 12 December 1997, by resolution 52/149, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 26 June the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, with a view to the total eradication of torture and the effective functioning of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, (resolution 39/46), which entered into force on 26 June 1987.

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/international-day-support-torture-victims>

## International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust (United Nations)

January 27 marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp. In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly designated this day as International Holocaust Remembrance Day (IHRD), an annual day of commemoration to honour the victims of the Nazi era.

Every member nation of the U.N. has an obligation to honour the memory of Holocaust victims and develop educational programs as part of an international resolve to help prevent future acts of genocide. The U.N. resolution that created IHRD rejects denial of the Holocaust, and condemns discrimination and violence based on religion or ethnicity.

In the Toronto District School Board, students have the opportunity to take a Locally Developed course, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity. In this course students explore in depth the causes and consequences of genocide and the lived realities of the aggressors, targets, bystanders, and resisters to these horrific acts of violence. This course fosters an open exploration of the controversial and sensitive issues surrounding genocide, including the need to address different perspectives in a fair manner that is thorough, balanced, and free of unfair biases. As a result students come to understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens and are challenged to take action to ensure that human rights are protected and that genocide is confronted.

Holocaust Museum Israel

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/commemoration-of-holocaust-victims>

## International Day of Democracy (United Nations)

*"Democracy is not only an end in itself; it contributes powerfully to economic and social progress, international peace and security and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms."*

*"Democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives."*

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

Message on the International Day of Democracy

15 September 2009

On 8 November 2007, the U.N. General Assembly proclaimed September 15 as the International Day of Democracy, inviting Member States, the United Nations system and other regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to commemorate the Day.

Further Reading: <http://www.un.org/en/events/democracyday/index.shtml>

***Democracy Definition:***

1) (a) government by the people; especially: rule of the majority;

(b) a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.

2) a political unit that has a democratic government

Source: [*http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy*](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy)

## International Day of Families (United Nations)

The International Day of Families, as proclaimed by the United Nations on May 15, is an occasion to reflect and celebrate the importance of families, people, societies and cultures around the world. It has been held every year since 1995.

The International Day of Families gives an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families and increase the knowledge of the social, economic and demographic processes affecting families. Governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and individuals are encouraged to organize observances/events of the day to promote a better understanding of the functions, problems, strengths and needs of families.

Further Reading:<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/IDF.html>

## International Day of Peace (United Nations)

The International Day of Peace, observed each year on the 21st of September, is a global call for ceasefire and non-violence. In 2009 the Secretary-General of the United Nations called on governments and citizens to focus on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The International Day of Peace was established by the UN General Assembly in 1981 for “commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace within and among all nations and people.” Twenty years later, the General Assembly decided that 21 September would be observed annually as a “day of global ceasefire and non-violence'' and invited all Member States, organizations and individuals to commemorate the day, including through education and public awareness, and to cooperate with the United Nations in the establishment of a global ceasefire.

Definitions:

***Non-proliferation:***

providing for the stoppage of proliferation (as of nuclear arms)

Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nonproliferation>

***Ceasefire***:

a period of truce, especially one that is temporary and a preliminary step to establishing a more permanent peace on agreed terms

Source: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/ceasefire?s=t>

Further Reading: [www.un.org/events/peaceday/](http://www.un.org/events/peaceday/)

## International Day of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations)

International Day of Persons with Disabilities is annually recognized on December 3rd and was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982. This day is meant to promote an understanding of disability issues, the rights of persons with disabilities and the positive impact of the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of the political, social, economic and cultural life of their communities. It provides an opportunity to achieve the goal of full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by persons with disabilities.

UN Enable writes, "The United Nations and the global community continue to work for the Mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development. Although many commitments have been made to include disability and persons with disabilities in development, the gap between policy and practice continues. Ensuring that persons with disabilities are integrated into all development activities is essential in order to achieve internationally agreed upon development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).” The Millennium Development Goals recognize both persons with disabilities and their family members. International initiatives such as the MDG are meant to foster and develop plans of action that will create a world where persons of disabilities are not faced with prejudice in social, economic, or political spaces.

This is a day to celebrate the wonderful initiatives that have been launched in achieving an equitable schooling environment, but to also reaffirm our commitment to creating and sustaining equal opportunities for education and development among staff, students, parents and community members with disabilities. Schools should be acknowledging this day through a variety of activities that promote learning and understanding.

Adapted from United Nations: <http://www.un.org/disabilities>

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/international-day-persons-disabilities>

## International Day of the Girl (United Nations)

The United Nations has declared October 11, 2015 as the world's International Day of the Girl.

Canada has led the international community in adopting this day, along with the support of Plan Canada. This day will make a difference in the lives of girls and young women as citizens and as powerful voices of change in their families, their communities and their nations. Equal opportunity for girls is good for all of us. Girls throughout the world face higher rates of violence, poverty and discrimination. In Canada, girls have higher rates of depression, sexual harassment and dating violence.

There is a growing recognition around the world that support for girls and their basic human rights is key for healthy communities. Improving girls' lives has a ripple effect. What is good for them is good for all of us. This international day will promote equal treatment and opportunities for girls around the world in areas such as law, nutrition, health care, education, training, and freedom from violence and abuse.

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/girl-child-day>

## International Day of World's Indigenous People (United Nations)

On the 23rd of December 1994, the United Nations General Assembly decided that the International Day of the World's Indigenous People shall be observed on the 9th of August every year. The date marks the day of the first meeting, of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub-commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in 1982.

The UN General Assembly had proclaimed 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, and the same year, the Assembly proclaimed the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, starting on 10 December 1994. The goal of the First International Decade was to strengthen international cooperation for solving problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health.

Adapted from <http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenous/2009/index.shtml>

## International Migrants Day (United Nations)

On December 4, 2000, the UN General Assembly, proclaimed December 18th as International Migrants Day. On December 18, 1990, the General Assembly had adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

UN Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are invited to observe International Migrants Day through the spread of information on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants, and through the sharing of experiences and the design of actions to ensure their protection.

Further Reading: <http://www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday/>

## International Mother Language Day (United Nations)

International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO's[[124]](#footnote-124) General Conference in November 1999. The International Day has been observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

Further Reading: <http://www.un.org/events/calendar/Edetail.asp?EventID=1608&BeginDate=2/21/2010>

## International Women’s and United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace (United Nations)

The celebration of March 8 as International Women's Day (IWD) recognizes the struggles of women against all forms of discrimination and exploitation, and focuses on the need for global equality, democracy and peace. On International Women's Day, women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences join in the commemoration of this significant event. On March 8th, 1908, women needle trade workers in New York, reacting against their brutal exploitation, held a women's day demonstration. These women fought for the right to unionize and demanded the right to vote. The success of the rally led to similar rallies in other US cities and in other countries.

Why is International Women's Day important to recognize in Canada?

* In 2005, women earned just 70.5% as much as men.
* 70% of minimum wage earners are women. More than half are immigrant, racial women.

Two million adult Canadian workers earn less than $10/hr. of which two thirds are women. (according to Statistics Canada, 2007).

Did you know?

* 51% of Canadian women have been assaulted and 83% of victims of sexual violence are women, while 99% of perpetrators are men.
* Canadian girls represent 79% of the victims of family related sexual assaults reported to Canadian police.
* Rates of sexual offences are highest against girls between the ages of 11 and 14, with the highest rate reported at age 13 (Canadian Center for Justice Statistics, 2005).

We need to be able to support our students in exploring gender violence and to engage in more nuanced conversations around these issues. Please visit the International Women's Day website to find out what's happening around the world on March 8!

Further Reading:

[www.internationalwomensday.com/](http://www.internationalwomensday.com/)

[www.un.org/womenwatch](http://www.un.org/womenwatch)

[www.forcedmigration.org/browse/thematic/womensday.htm](http://www.forcedmigration.org/browse/thematic/womensday.htm)

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp>

## International Youth Day (United Nations)

In 1999, the United Nations General Assembly declared August 12 International Youth Day. The purpose was to improve the situation of young people, and acknowledge their contributions to society.

*“Young people often lead by example: practicing green and healthy lifestyles, or promoting innovative uses of new technologies, such as mobile devices and on-line so­cial networks. They deserve our full commitment — full access to education, adequate healthcare, employment opportunities, financial services and full participation in public life. On International Youth Day, let us renew our pledge to support young people in their development. Sustainability is the most promising path forward, and youth can lead the way.”*

Message from the Secretary General on the

Occasion of the International Youth Day, 2009

Further Reading: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/index.html>

## Nelson Mandela International Day (United Nations)

In November 2009, the UN General Assembly declared 18 July “Nelson Mandela International Day” in recognition of the former South African President’s contribution to the culture of peace and freedom.

The General Assembly’s resolution recognizes Nelson Mandela’s values and his dedication to the service of humanity, in the fields of conflict resolution, race relations, the promotion and protection of human rights, reconciliation, gender equality and the rights of children and other vulnerable groups. Further, the resolution recognizes for his work uplifting vulnerable groups from poverty in underdeveloped communities and also acknowledges his contribution to the struggle for democracy internationally and the promotion of a culture of peace throughout the world.

Statue of Nelson Mandela in Mandela (formerly Sandton) Square, Johannesburg, S.A.

This day reminds us of the importance of challenging injustice, upholding freedom and democracy, and promoting a culture of peace throughout the world. Nelson Mandela truly exemplifies commitment, moral fortitude and service to humanity. For all of his major contributions to society and social justice, it is important to recognize Nelson Mandela and continue his fight against injustices and inequalities.

Further Reading: [www.**biography**.com/people/**nelson**-**mandela**-9397017](http://www.biography.com/people/nelson-mandela-9397017)

## *Universal Children's Day (United Nations)*

After the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989, the UN General Assembly recommended that all countries choose a day to promote children's welfare. Although observance of the day varies from country to country, the Government of Canada designated November 20th as National Child Day, to commemorate the day on which both the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) were adopted.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child addresses the rights of children and youth under the age of 18. It recognizes their basic human rights and gives them additional rights to protect them from harm. The Convention's 54 articles cover everything from a child's right to be free from exploitation, to the right to his or her own opinion and the right to education, health care, and economic opportunity.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the creation of Universal Children's Day reflects the growing recognition that children are important and valued members of society, now and in the future. Universal Children's Day celebrates children just for being themselves. It reminds us that children need love and respect to grow to their full potential. It is a day to listen to children, to marvel at their uniqueness and all they have to offer.

A key objective of Universal Children's Day is to increase awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since its adoption by the United Nations, the Convention has been signed or ratified by more countries than any other international treaty. Over the past decade, the Convention has proven to be a valuable tool for promoting the rights of children everywhere around the world.”

Adapted from: UNA-Canada, Universal Children’s Day <http://www.unac.org/en/news_events/un_days/children1.asp>

Further Reading: <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/child.asp>

## World AIDS Day (United Nations)

According to United Nations AIDS estimates, there are now 33.2 million people living with HIV, including 2.5 million children. During 2007, some 2.5 million people became newly infected with the virus. Around half of all people who become infected with HIV do so before they are 25 and are killed by AIDS before they are 35.

Approximately 95% of people with HIV/AIDS live in developing nations. But HIV today is a threat to men, women and children on all continents around the world.

Started on 1 December 1988, World AIDS Day is about raising money, increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education. World AIDS Day is important in reminding people that HIV is still prevalent in our society and that there are many things we can all do to assist in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Further Reading: <http://www.aids2016.org/Get-Involved/World-AIDS-Day>

## World Autism Awareness Day

The following is UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ message on World Autism *Awareness Day, observed on 2 April:*

*“On this* ***World Autism Awareness Day****, let us all play a part in changing attitudes towards persons with autism and in recognizing their rights as citizens, who, like everyone else, are entitled to claim those rights and make decisions for their lives in accordance with their own will and preferences. Let us also renew our promise, engraved in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to leave no one behind and ensure that all people can contribute as active members to peaceful and prosperous societies.*

*As the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities points out, legal capacity and equal recognition before the law are inherent rights that persons with autism enjoy on an equal basis with other members of our societies.*

*In the exercise of those rights and their freedom to make their own choices, let us ensure that we make available the necessary accommodations and support to persons with autism. With access to the support they need and choose, they will be empowered to face the key milestones in every person’s life, such as deciding where and with whom to live, whether to get married and establish a family, what type of work to pursue and how to manage their personal finances.*

*When they enjoy equal opportunity for self-determination and autonomy, persons with autism will be empowered to make an even stronger positive impact on our shared future.”*

Further Reading: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sgsm18476.doc.htm>

## World Day Against Child Labour Day (United Nations)

The [International Labour Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Labour_Organization) (ILO), the [United Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) body which regulates the world of work, launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 in order to bring attention and join efforts to fight against child labour. This day brings together governments, local authorities, civil society and international, workers and employers organizations to point out the child labour problem and define the guidelines to help child labourers.

According to ILO's data, hundreds of millions of girls and boys throughout the world are involved in work that deprives them from receiving adequate education, health, leisure and basic freedoms, violating in this way their rights. Of these children, more than half are exposed to the worst forms of child labour. These worst forms of child labour include work in hazardous environments, slavery, or other forms of [forced labour](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unfree_labour), illicit activities such as drug trafficking and [prostitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution), as well as involvement in armed conflict.

The World Day Against Child Labour provides an opportunity to gain further support of individual governments and local authorities, as well as that of the ILO social partners, civil society and others, in the campaign to tackle child labour.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Day_Against_Child_Labour>

## World Day of Social Justice (United Nations)

At its sixty-second session, in November 2007, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 20 February as World Day of Social Justice. The day was observed for the first time in 2009.

Member states were invited to devote this special day to the promotion of concrete national activities in accordance with the objectives and goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, entitled “World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world.”

As recognized by the World Summit, social development aims at social justice, solidarity, harmony and equality within and among countries and social justice, equality and equity constitute the fundamental values of all societies. To achieve “a society for all” governments made a commitment to the creation of a framework for action to promote social justice at national, regional and international levels. They also pledged to promote the equitable distribution of income and greater access to resources through equity and equality and opportunity for all. The governments recognized as well that economic growth should promote equity and social justice and that “a society for all” must be based on social justice and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The observance of the day should contribute to the further consolidation of the efforts of the international community in poverty eradication, promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity, and access to social well-being and justice for all.

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/world-social-justice-day>

## World Day to Combat Desertification & Drought (United Nations)

In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly declared June 17 the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought to promote public awareness of the issue. In addition to raising awareness the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa was implemented.

Sustainable land use is a prerequisite for lifting billions from poverty, enabling food and nutrition security, and safeguarding water supplies. It is a cornerstone of sustainable development. The problems associated with drought and desertification, affect all regions of the world, so the problem is truly global; therefore, joint action by the international community continues to be necessary to address this problem. This day highlights the urgent need to curb the desertification process. It also aims to strengthen the visibility of the dry lands issue on the international environmental agenda.

Further Reading: <http://www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/>

## World Environment Day (United Nations)

"WED celebration began in 1972 and has grown to become one of the main vehicles through which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action.

Through WED, the UN Environment Programme is able to personalize environmental issues and enable everyone to realize not only their responsibility, but also their power to become agents for change in support of sustainable and equitable development.

WED is also a day for people from all walks of life to come together to ensure a cleaner, greener and brighter outlook for the environment, themselves and future generations."

Further Reading: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/world-environment-day>

## World Food Day (United Nations)

Food is essential for life. To be healthy and well nourished, we must have adequate amounts of a variety of good-quality, safe foods. Without adequate nutrition, children and young people cannot develop to their full potential and adults will also experience difficulty in maintaining or expanding theirs.

World Food Day was proclaimed in 1979 by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It marks the date of the founding of FAO in 1945. The aim of the day is to heighten public awareness of the world food problem and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, poverty and malnutrition.

Further Reading: <http://www.fao.org/world-food-day/2016/home/en/>

## World Refugee Day (United Nations)

For years, many countries and regions have been holding their own Refugee Days and even weeks. One of the most widespread is Africa Refugee Day, which is celebrated on June 20th in several countries. As an expression of solidarity with Africa, which hosts the most refugees, and which traditionally has shown them great generosity, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 55/76 on 4th of December 2000. In this resolution, the General Assembly noted that 2001 marked the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had agreed to have International Refugee Day coincide with Africa Refugee Day on June 20. The Assembly therefore decided that, from 2001, June 20 would be celebrated as World Refugee Day.

Adapted from United Nations:

[*http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/refugee/Video*](http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/refugee/Video)

## World Teachers' Day (United Nations)

(Adopted by TDSB Motion April 2015)

World Teachers’ Day is celebrated around the world on October 5th.

World Teachers’ Day was established by UNESCO in 1993 to honour the Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers which was passed by a special joint committee of UNESCO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on October 5, 1966. This recommendation proclaimed that the recognition of the vital contributions of teachers should be acknowledged, celebrated, and supported by all members of society.

Some of the important tasks performed by teachers every day include:

* assisting people in adapting and responding to a rapidly changing world
* educating a diverse range of learners from varied backgrounds with different learning styles and needs
* developing dynamic approaches to curriculum and implement effective and equitable pedagogical tools and practices
* bringing values such as environmental awareness, human rights, peace, social justice, and healthy living into the classroom
* making a positive difference in the lives of students, families and communities

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Teachers%27_Day>

## World Water Day (United Nations)

International World Water Day is held annually on March 22nd to focus attention on the importance of freshwater and advocate for the sustainable management of the world’s supply of freshwater. The United Nations General Assembly responded by designating 22 March 1993 as the first World Water Day. Since 1993, World Water Days have highlighted some key issues around freshwater, including sanitation, natural disasters and distributing water in big cities.

Further Reading: <http://www.unwater.org/campaigns/world-water-day/en/>

# U.S.A. FEDERAL HOLIDAY

## Martin Luther King Jr. Day (U.S.A. Federal Holiday)

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, but his birthday is now celebrated on the third Monday in January, also known as Martins Day. In 2017, Martins Day falls on Monday, January 16.

Although deemed an American holiday, and celebrated most widely in the United States, this day is marked by many around the world who wish to acknowledge the global significance and impact of Dr. King’s work as a civil rights leader.

In his famous speech delivered on the steps at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC on August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. articulated his vision of a more just society. It included the following words:

*I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.*

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.*

Meeting with Malcolm X\*\* in 1964

*I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.*

*I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.*

*I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.*

*I have a dream today.* D. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Further Reading: [www.nobelprize.org/nobel\_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/**king**-bio.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html)

Further Reading: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/**Martin**\_**Luther**\_**King**\_Jr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King_Jr).

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\*\* Footnote: Malcolm X** - (1925–1965) was an influential and controversial [African-American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Americans) [Muslim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_the_United_States) minister and [human rights activist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_activists). To his admirers he was a courageous advocate for the rights of blacks, a man who indicted white America in the harshest terms for its crimes against black Americans; detractors accused him of preaching [racism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism) and violence. He has been called one of the greatest and most influential [African Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Americans) in history.

His father was killed when he was six and his mother was placed in a mental hospital when he was thirteen, after which he lived in a series of [foster homes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foster_home). In 1946, at age twenty, he went to prison for [larceny](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larceny) and breaking and entering. While in prison, he became a member of the [Nation of Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_of_Islam) (NOI), changing his birth name Malcolm Littleto Malcolm X because, he later wrote, *Little* was the name that "the white slavemaster... had imposed upon my paternal forebears." After his parole in 1952 he quickly rose to become one of the organization's most influential leaders, serving as the public face of the controversial group for a dozen years. In his autobiography, Malcolm X wrote proudly of some of the social achievements the Nation made while he was a member, particularly its free [drug rehabilitation program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_rehabilitation). The Nation promoted [black supremacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_supremacy), advocated the [separation of black and white Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_separatism), and rejected the [civil rights movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights_movement) for its emphasis on [integration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_integration).

By March 1964, Malcolm X had grown disillusioned with the Nation of Islam and its leader [Elijah Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Muhammad). Expressing many regrets about his time with them, which he had come to regard as largely wasted, he embraced [Sunni Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunni_Islam). After a period of travel in Africa and the Middle East, which included completing the [Hajj](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hajj), he also became known as el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz. He repudiated the Nation of Islam, disavowed racism and founded [*Muslim Mosque, Inc*.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_Mosque,_Inc.) and the [*Organization of Afro-American Unity*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_Afro-American_Unity). He continued to emphasize [Pan-Africanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-Africanism), black self-determination, and black self-defense.

On February 21, 1965, he was assassinated in New York City by three members of the Nation of Islam.

In a statement regarding the murder of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. indicated: “*While we did not always see eye to eye on methods to solve the race problem, I always had a deep affection for Malcolm and felt that he had a great ability to put his finger on the existence and root of the problem. He was an eloquent spokesman for his point of view and no one can honestly doubt that Malcolm had a great concern for the problems that we face as a race”.*

Martin Luther King, Jr. was to meet with the same fate and died from an assassin’s bullet approximately 3 years later on 04 April 1968 in Memphis, Tenessee.

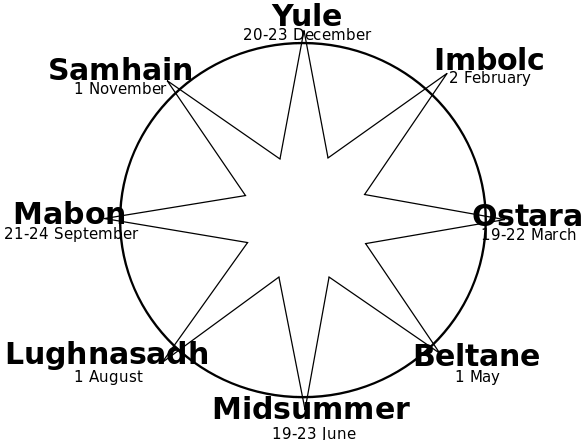
# WICCA/PAGAN

## Beltane (Wicca/Pagan)

Many Wiccans and Pagans celebrate Beltane. It is one of eight solar Sabbats[[125]](#footnote-125). This holiday incorporates traditions from the Gaelic Beltane, such as the bonfire, but it bears more relation to the Germanic May Day festival, both in its significance (focusing on fertility) and its rituals (such as May pole dancing). Some traditions celebrate this holiday on May 1 or May Day, whiles others begin their celebration the eve before or April 30th. Beltane has long been celebrated with feasts and rituals. The name means fire of Bel; Belinos being one name for the Sun God, whose coronation feast we now celebrate. As summer begins, weather becomes warmer, and the plant world blossoms, and an exuberant mood prevails.

Further Reading: <http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/beltanemayday/a/AllAboutBeltane.htm>

## Imbolc (Wicca/Pagan)

Imbolc or Imbolg (pronounced [*i-molg*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Pronunciation_respelling_key)), also called (Saint) Brigid's Day ([Irish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_language): *Lá Fhéile Bríde*, [Scottish Gaelic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Gaelic_language): *Là Fhèill Brìghde*, [Manx](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manx_language): *Laa'l Breeshey*), is a [Gaelic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaels) festival marking the beginning of spring. Most commonly it is held on 1 February, or about halfway between the [winter solstice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_solstice) and the [spring equinox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spring_equinox). Historically, it was widely observed throughout [Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ireland), [Scotland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland) and the [Isle of Man](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isle_of_Man). It is one of the four Gaelic seasonal festivals—along with [Beltane](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beltane), [Lughnassadh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lughnasadh) and [Samhain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samhain)—and corresponds to the Welsh [*Gŵyl Fair y Canhwyllau*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C5%B5yl_Fair_y_Canhwyllau). Christians observe it as the [feast day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calendar_of_saints) of [Saint Brigid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigit_of_Kildare), especially in Ireland.

The Tree of Four Seasons

Imbolc is mentioned in some of the [earliest Irish literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Irish_literature) and there is evidence it has been an important date since ancient times. It is believed that it was originally a [pagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_polytheism) festival associated with the goddess [Brigid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigid) and that it was [Christianized](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianization) as a festival of Saint Brigid, who is thought to be a [Christianization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism) of the goddess. At Imbolc, [Brigid's crosses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigid%27s_cross) were made and a [doll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doll)-like figure of Brigid, called a *Brídeóg*, would be paraded from house-to-house. Brigid was said to visit one's home at Imbolc. To receive her blessings, people would make a bed for Brigid and leave her food and drink, while items of clothing would be left outside for her to bless. Brigid was also invoked to protect homes and livestock. Special feasts were had, [holy wells](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_well) were visited and it was also a time for [divination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divination).

Although many of its customs died out in the 20th century, it is still observed and in some places it has been revived as a cultural event. Since the latter 20th century, [Celtic neopagans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_Neopaganism) and [Wiccans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicca) have observed Imbolc, or something based on it, as a religious holiday.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imbolc>

## Lady Day (Wicca/Pagan)

Also known as Alban Eiler (Druidic):

As Spring reaches its midpoint, night and day stand in perfect balance, with light on the increase. The young Sun God now celebrates a hierogamy (sacred marriage) with the young Maiden Goddess, who conceives. In nine months, she will again become the Great Mother. It is a time of great fertility, new growth, and newborn animals.

The next full moon (a time of increased births) is called the Ostara and is sacred to Eostre the Saxon Lunar Goddess of fertility (from whence we get the word estrogen, whose two symbols were the egg and the rabbit.

The Christian religion adopted these emblems for Easter which is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. The theme of the conception of the Goddess was adapted as the Feast of the Annunciation, occurring on the alternative fixed calendar date of March 25 Old Lady Day, the earlier date of the equinox. Lady Day may also refer to other goddesses (such as Venus and Aphrodite), many of whom have festivals celebrated at this time.

***Traditional Foods:*** Leafy green vegetables, Dairy foods, Nuts such as Pumpkin, Sunflower and Pine. Flower Dishes and Sprouts.

***Herbs and Flowers:*** Daffodils, Jonquils, Woodruff, Violet, Gorse, Olive, Peony, Iris, Narcissus and all spring flowers.

***Incense:*** Jasmine, Rose, Strawberry, Floral of any type.

***Sacred Gemstone:*** Jasper

***Special Activities:*** Planting seeds or starting a Magical Herb Garden or taking a long walk in nature with no intent other than reflecting on the Magic of Nature and our Great Mother and her bounty.

Further Reading: <https://wicca.com/celtic/akasha/ostara.htm>

## Litha/Summer Solstice (Wicca/Pagan)



Summer Solstice is one of Wicca's eight major festivals of the year. The Summer Solstice celebrates the Sun God at its longest, highest, and brightest point during the course of the year. During this period the gardens are fruitful and blossomed, the wildlife is flourishing, and the trees are covered with green leaves. There are many rituals carried out during the Summer Solstice. A cauldron filled with water and decorated with flowers, is placed outside in front of an altar where the ritual is to be held. There are two crowns made for the ceremony, one out of oak leaves and one out of holly leaves. Then, two kings are chosen, by nomination or sometimes by drawing straws. The man with the longest straw becomes the Oak King and the man with the shortest straw becomes the Holly King.

Litha Midsummer Celebration at Stonehenge, England

Since daylight begins to shorten after Summer Solstice, the Oak King’s (long straw) reign comes to an end on this day. The Holly King symbolically kills the Oak King, beginning his reign of the waning portion of the year. The celebrations then move to a Midsummer Dance, performed by a High Priestess representing the Goddess. After this, the Oak King relinquishes his crown and joins the rest of the group. The High Priestess then orders the lighting of the bonfires. The people make a wish as they pass a midsummer candle. Then, the group begins to dance.

Further Reading: <http://www.thewhitegoddess.co.uk/the_wheel_of_the_year/litha_-_summer_solstice.asp>

## Lughnassadh/Lammas (Wicca/Pagan)

[Wiccans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicca) use the names "Lughnassadh" or "Lammas" for the first of their autumn harvest festivals. It is one of the eight yearly "Sabbats" of their [Wheel of the Year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheel_of_the_Year), following Midsummer and preceding Mabon. It is seen as one of the two most auspicious times for [hand fasting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handfasting_(Neopaganism)), the other being at Beltane. Some Wiccans mark the holiday by baking a figure of the "corn god" in bread, and then symbolically sacrificing and eating it.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lughnasadh>

## Mabon Autumn Equinox (Wicca/Pagan)

Wiccans celebrate the Solstices and Equinoxes as stations on the 'wheel of the year', or the cycles of the Earth that drive the seasons as an immanent expression of the God and Goddess. Harvestide is considered the second of the three harvest festivals and occurs on the Autumnal Equinox, also known by the name Mabon. The balance of light and dark before the ascent of night until Yule holds special significance in Mabon along with acknowledging the bounty of the earth given by the Gods to sustain us through winter months. Ritual actions can include acknowledgement of other bounties of the year (spiritual, emotional or social), as well as giving back to the Gods a portion of what we have taken as thanks. There are even some time-honoured celebratory folk customs such as making corn dollies. There is almost always a feast that features food from the season that is communally shared with all comers.

Further Reading: [www.thewhitegoddess.co.uk/the\_wheel\_of\_the.../mabon\_-\_autumn\_equinox.asp](http://www.thewhitegoddess.co.uk/the_wheel_of_the.../mabon_-_autumn_equinox.asp)

## Ostara Spring Equinox (Wicca/Pagan)

Spring is a time of renewal after the long cold winter! The celebration of this is centered around the spring equinox, which is called Ostara/Eostre after the goddess it celebrates.

As one of the two times where the night is equal to the day, the focus is often on re-balance both within ourselves, and in our lives; assessing the lessons of the past season, and approaching the coming spring with joy. All around us the earth is moving into wakefulness, with the trees budding and the first spring shoots moving sunwards through the snow.

Symbols of the Sabbat include such time honoured tokens of fertility as eggs, rabbits, and flowers, as well as the lambs whose coming is celebrated at Imbolc. In the Wiccan cycle of the Gods, the God and Goddess are both in their youthful aspects, the Young Lord and the Maiden.

Further Reading: <http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/ostarathespringequinox/a/AllAboutOstara.htm>

## Samhain (Wicca/Pagan)

Samhain is a Gaelic term meaning ‘summer’s end,’ and is the Wiccan New Year. The celebration begins at sundown on October 31st and continues into the next day. It is considered the last of the three harvest festivals. In the past, this would have been the 'meat' harvest, in which livestock that could not be sustained through the winter (due to lack of food, water, etc.) were slaughtered. This meat provided the communities with a food supply for the coming months.

Samhain is also the formal beginning of the 'dark' half of the year which ends on Beltane ***(April 30th-May 1st)*** and is often associated with death. This continues today with many Wiccan groups gathering together to celebrate their ancestors, and the gifts given to them, in the form of family lore, skills, and wisdom. Candles are lit to call their souls back for the night and a feast is held with plates of food prepared for the honoured dead.

Further Reading: <http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/samhainoctober31/p/Samhain_History.htm>

## Yule Winter Solstice (Wicca/Pagan)

The shortest day of the year 2016 occurs on December 21st, which also has the longest night. Hence, Yule is considered the time of ‘greatest darkness’.

The origins of Yule are difficult to isolate, however it is believed that it stems from Celtic and Scandinavian traditions. According to Wiccan traditions, it is believed the Sun God is reborn on this day to bring light to everyone’s lives.

The return of light is just one aspect of Yule, another one focuses on surviving the darkness together, and overcoming the winter with triumph. Yule is celebrated with the completion of many customs, including the burning of a Yule log, feasting, and Yule singing. The Yule log is a tree that is meant to signify the existence of life, even while there is darkness for most of the day.

Feasting is a common practice to commemorate Yule or Winter’s Solstice, as well as holding an all-night vigil with rituals that culminate at sunrise the next day. Oranges are often blessed and stored to be burned at Midsummer, and candles are lit in sympathy with the returning Sun.

Further Reading: <https://wicca.com/celtic/akasha/yule.htm>

# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

## International Day of Zero Tolerance on Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation (World Health Organization)

Female genital mutilation (FGM), also called female genital cutting (FGC), refers to the removal of all or part of the female genitalia. Despite global efforts to promote abandonment of the practice, FGM/C remains widespread in many countries. But UNFPA and UNICEF, through a joint programme launched in 2007, are working to put an end to this persistent violation of the human rights of girls and women in one generation. Some 3 million women and girls face FGM/C every year, while some 100 to 140 million have already undergone the practice.

Female genital mutilation/cutting has both immediate and long-term consequences for the health of women. The effects of FGM/C depend on the type performed, the expertise of the practitioner, the conditions under which it is conducted, the amount of resistance, and the general health condition of the girl/woman undergoing the procedure. Complications may occur in all types of FGM/C, but are most frequent with infibulation, which includes stitching or narrowing of the vaginal opening.

The practice of FGM/C has had immediate and lifelong psychological affects on the estimated 100 to 140 million women and girls who have been subjected to this procedure. The experience has also been related to a range of psychological and psychosomatic disorders which, in turn, affect eating, sleeping, moods and cognition. Symptoms can manifest themselves in various ways, including those associated with post-traumatic stress syndrome. Severe physical health consequences can also emerge.

One of the most common explanations for continuing the FGM/C practice is local custom. Additional factors underlying the practice include:

* Sociological: As an initiation for girls into womanhood, social integration and the maintenance of social cohesion
* Hygienic and aesthetic: Where it is believed that the female genitalia are dirty and unsightly
* Sexual: To control or reduce female sexuality
* Health: In the belief that it enhances fertility and child survival
* Religious: In the belief that it is a religious requirement
* Socio-economic factors: When it is believed that FGM/C is a prerequisite for marriage and when women, oppressed by patriarchal and sexist systems are largely dependent on men - economic necessity can be a determinant to undergo the procedure. FGM/C may also be a major source of income for circumcisers.

Working towards the abolishment of FGM/C requires a thorough exploration of the beliefs, values and systems which underpin the practice. The involvement of men and boys throughout efforts to end FGM/C is a critical strategy in making progress. Some overdue effort is being made to abolish FGC, but there is still much work to be done. Education of ourselves, as well as of others is a way that we can begin acting upon the convictions that human rights should not be violated, and that gender-based violence is intolerable.

Many people are still unaware that practices such as FGC are still widely practiced, and only awareness can bring this inhumane practice to a halt.

Further Reading:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\_Day\_of\_Zero\_](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Day_of_Zero_Tolerance_to_Female Genital_Mutilation)

[Tolerance\_to\_Female Genital\_Mutilation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Day_of_Zero_Tolerance_to_Female Genital_Mutilation)

For more information: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp>

## World Diabetes Day (World Health Organization)

Diabetes is a chronic disease that occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces. Hyperglycaemia, or raised blood sugar, is a common effect of uncontrolled diabetes and over time leads to serious damage to many of the body's systems, especially the nerves and blood vessels. World Diabetes Day is celebrated annually on November 14th. Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood. About 70 000 children under the age of 15 are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes every year, according to International Diabetes Federation estimates. This day recognizes and spreads awareness of the chronic, debilitating and costly nature of the disease.

Further Reading: <http://www.idf.org/WDD15-guide/>

## World Health Day (World Health Organization)

The World Health Dayis a global health [awareness day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Awareness_day) celebrated every year on 7 April, under the sponsorship of the [World Health Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Organization) (WHO).

In 1948, the WHO held the First [World Health Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Assembly). The Assembly decided to celebrate 7 April of each year, with effect from 1950, as the World Health Day. The World Health Day is held to mark WHO's founding, and is seen as an opportunity by the organization to draw worldwide attention to a subject of major importance to [global health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_health) each year.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Day#cite_note-1) The WHO organizes international, regional and local events on the Day related to a particular theme. World Health Day is acknowledged by various governments and non-governmental organizations with interests in [public health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_health) issues, who also organize activities and highlight their support in media reports, such as the [Global Health Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Health_Council).

World Health Day is one of eight official global public health campaigns marked by WHO, along with [World Tuberculosis Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Tuberculosis_Day), [World Immunization Week](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Immunization_Week), [World Malaria Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Malaria_Day), [World No Tobacco Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_No_Tobacco_Day), Day, World, [World Hepatitis Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Hepatitis_Day), and [World AIDS Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_AIDS_Day)

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Day>

## World Mental Health Day (World Health Organization)

World Mental Health Day was established to raise public awareness about mental health issues. The Day promotes open discussion as well as greater investment in treatment and prevention services.

Mental Health refers to a broad array of activities directly or indirectly related to the mental well-being component included in the WHO's definition of health: "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease". It is related to the promotion of well-being, the prevention of mental disorders, and the treatment and rehabilitation of people affected by mental disorders.

Did you know?

* In Canada, the value of lost productivity attributable to mental illness was estimated at $8.1 billion.
* Many children in our schools are living with adults who may be struggling with one or more mental health issues.
* 1 in 5 children will face a mental health challenge at some point in their childhood or adolescence.
* 70% of adult mental illnesses can be traced back to childhood.
* Young people with mental health disorders are at greater risk for dropping out of school, ending up in jail and of not being fully functional members of society in adulthood.

The TDSB supports increasing awareness and decreasing the stigma associated with these issues that impact the lives of many of our students and families.

Further Reading: <http://www.who.int/mental_health/world-mental-health-day/en/>

## World No Tobacco Day (World Health Organization)

World No Tobacco Day is a day to teach the public about the tobacco industry's harmful tactics to draw people into buying and using tobacco.

Tobacco use is one of the leading preventable causes of death. The global tobacco epidemic kills nearly 6 million people each year, of which more than 600,000 are people exposed to second-hand smoke. Unless we act, it will kill up to 8 million people by 2030, of which more than 80% will live in low- and middle-income countries.

On World No Tobacco Day, and throughout the year, the World Health Organization (WHO), will urge countries to put the fight against tobacco industry interference at the heart of their efforts to control the global tobacco epidemic.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_No_Tobacco_Day>

# YOUNG MEN’S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION (YMCA/GLSEN)

## Week Without Violence (YMCA)

Each year during the third week of October, Canadians bond with people in over 90 countries around the world to mark YWCA's Week Without Violence, a week-long series of community events promoting diverse approaches to creating a violence-free world. More than 17,000 people in schools, workplaces and neighbourhood organizations throughout Canada recognize this annual violence prevention initiative aimed at making violence a thing of the past.

The YWCA Week Without Violence encourages people and communities to identify realistic and sustainable alternatives to violence. The support and involvement of schools, politicians, law enforcement agencies, faith groups and national and local community organizations helps create safer places to live, work and play.

Violence in all its forms undermines our quality of life. Because violence reaches into our cities and towns, our schools, our homes, and our work places, it affects all of us. No matter where we live, violence and fear have become part of our everyday lives. To change this we need to take action against violence—to speak out against it and to change and influence the values and attitudes that affect violence. We can begin by imagining a life without violence—we can work to make it reality. On the TDSB's Gender Based Violence Prevention website you will find suggested activities to reduce the influence and power violence has on our daily lives. There are stories of hope and success, current statistics and helpful organizing tools to assist you in planning your events. Let's seize this opportunity to participate in the YWCA Week Without Violence so that we can work toward creating safer communities. Our lives are depending on it.

Further Reading: <http://ywcacanada.ca/en/pages/wwv>

# YOUNG WOMEN’S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION (YWCA/GLSEN)

## LGBTTQQI2S Ally Week (YWCA)

Queer and Trans Ally Week is a youth-led effort empowering students to be allies against homophobic, transphobic and gender-based bullying, harassment and name-calling in schools. Ally Week is a week for students to organize events that support and celebrate queer and trans students while at the same time standing up and challenging homophobia, transphobia and all gender-based violence in schools.

For resources, please email:

Javier Davila at the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Office: [javier.davila@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:javier.davila@tdsb.on.ca)

Further Reading:

<http://ywcacanada.ca/en/pages/wwv/introduction>

<http://glsen.org/allyweek/>

# ZOROASTRIAN

## Ashu Zarathosht’s Death (Zoroastrian)

It is believed that Zoroaster (founder) was born more than 3,800 years ago and (according to legend) was murdered by the [Daevas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daeva) (who were supernatural entities with disagreeable characteristics.) Another claim is that he died as a result of an obscure conflict with a prehistoric tribe named the Turan.

Further Reading: <http://shiraz.freeservers.com/zr3.htm>

## Birth of Lord Zoroaster, Khordad Sal (Zoroastrian)

Khordad Sal is the birth anniversary (or birthdate) of [Zoroaster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroaster). [Zoroastrians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrian) all over the world, [specifically in India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsi), celebrate the day with great glamour. Parties and [ghambars](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ghambar&action=edit&redlink=1) (or gahambars)[[126]](#footnote-126) are held. Special prayers and *jashan*[[127]](#footnote-127) are also held throughout the entire day. Clean, [rangoli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rangoli)[[128]](#footnote-128)-strewn homes, children with vermilion spots on their foreheads, new [clothes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clothes), fragrant flowers and delicious meals, all form parts of the rituals. A grand feast is prepared to mark the occasion.

Zoroastrians Enjoying a Feast Celebrating the Birth of Khordad Sal

Since the Parsi community is especially united, its celebrations bring kith and kin together; so does Khordad Sal. The festival is also an opportunity for the Parsis to review their lives and actions, and make resolutions for the future.

Further Reading: <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/deanofstudents/2013/03/26/holidays-and-holy-days-khordad-sal-zoroastrianism/>

## Jashan-e-Sadeh (Zoroastrian)

Sadeh is a mid-winter celebration observed by Zoroastrians. It includes preparing a large bonfire and is therefore also known as Adur-Jashan (Feast of Fire). The bonfire is to drive back the winter in defiance of Ahriman (Satan). It is a deeply religious festival. Sadeh has a complex history, and two different traditions are to be noted:

By Yazd[[129]](#footnote-129) tradition, it is observed on Ashtad ruz, Adur Mah. This is the 100th ("sadeh" in Persian) day before Noruz. According to the Fasli calendar, this would place it on Dec 11.



The other day, observed by Kermani Zoroastrians, is Aban ruz, Vohuman mah (hundredth day after the gahambar of Ayathrima, held to be the beginning of winter) approx. January 24.

The chief preparation is the gathering of wood, and everyone in the community is expected to contribute. If one participates and gathers wood God will grant them their wish, if they don’t, God will not grant them their wish.

City of Yadz, Central Iran

(Perhaps there is some connection here with the custom of wishing on candles at birthdays.) People begin to gather an hour before sunset, a spot near a stream seems to be preferred. The lighting of the fire is properly preceeded by an [Afrinagan-e Do Dahman,](http://www.avesta.org/afrin/asb.htm) a ceremony of blessing for the whole community, and [Atash Niyayesh (fire litany)](http://www.avesta.org/ka/niyayesh.htm#ny5). Although it is mentioned in the [Qissa-i Sanjan](http://www.avesta.org/other/qsanjan.htm), Sadeh does not seem to have much significance among modern Parsi Zoroastrians.

Further Reading: <http://www.avesta.org/sadeh.htm>

## Mehergan (Zoroastrianism)

In a time of myth and legend, before recorded history, we are told that there was a cruel tyrant called Zohak, under whose rule, the people suffered greatly and lived in fear as to what terrors each new day might bring. Zohak’s cruelty and injustice became so intolerable, that he was finally overthrown under the leadership of Kaveh the blacksmith, and the legendary hero Faridoon, who became king in his place.

Upon the defeat of Zohak, Faridoon decreed that a great festival be held, and, according to Zoroastrian tradition, this is the festival which came to be known as Mehergan.

It is widely held, however, that the origins of Mehergan pre-dated Zoroastrianism and the feast was originally celebrated to honor Mithras, a pre-Zoroastrian deity of the Indo-European tribes. It is interesting that in the centuries following Zarathustra, instead of persecuting this religion, the Zoroastrians simply absorbed it and included it within the tradition.

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehregan>

## NawRuz/Nourooz New Year (See Bahá’i NawRuz/Nourooz New Year)

The UN General Assembly, in 2010 recognized the International Day of NawRuz, describing it as a Spring Festival of Persian origin which has been celebrated for over 3,000 years.

## Prophet Asho Zarthosht Birthday (Zoroastrian)

Asho Zothosht was the first prophet who introduced "mono-theism" (belief in One God) to the world. We add the title of "Asho" (the righteous one) when we address his name. Asho Zarthosht was chosen by Ahura Mazda (God) to be a prophet to guide the people, on the path of Truth and Righteousness. He was born in north eastern Iran about 3760 years ago. Asho Zarathosht’s birthday falls on the 26th of March every year. This day coincides with the "Fasli" calendar "Khordad" day and "Farvardin" month. He announced his Prophecy on his 30th birthday, during the reign of King Goshtasb of Iran. The religion that Asho Zarthosht brought to mankind is based on the "3" Divine Principles "HU-MATA", "HU-KHTA" and "HU-RESHTA" "Good Thoughts", "Good Words" and "Good Deeds".

Asho-Zarathosht’s teachings are contained in the Holy "Gathas". There are 5 "Gathas" which in turn have 17 sections. The "Gathas" are also part of our "Avesta" prayers[[130]](#footnote-130).

Further Reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroaster>

1. **Portent:** an indication or omen of something is about to happen, especially something momentous. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Abstain**: to hold oneself back voluntarily [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Covenent**: a solemn agreement between members of a religion to act together in harmony with the precepts of a faith [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **Intercalary**: inserted into a calendar, as an extra day or month. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **Vernal**: of or relating to Spring [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. **Dissipate**: to scatter in various directions; disperse; dispel [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **Prophethood**: a person charged with the responsibility to speak on behalf of God or a deity, or by divine inspiration [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. **Theravada Buddhism**: the earlier of the two great schools of Buddhism, still prevalent in Sri Lanka, Myanmar (formerly Burma), Thailand, and Cambodia, emphasizing personal salvation through one's own efforts [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. **Deer Park**: a park in Sarnath, India where Buddha gave his first public address after attaining enlightenment [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. **Gautama Buddha**.(*Prince Siddhāttha*or *Siddhartha*) 566?–c480 B.C.E. (Before the Christian Era), Indian religious leader: founder of [Buddhism](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/buddhism) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. **Dharma**: the doctrine or teaching of the Buddha [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. **Sangha**: a community of Buddhist monks [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. **Enlightenment**: pure and unqualified knowledge [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. **Forsaken**: to quit or leave entirely; abandon; desert [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. **Ascetic**: a person who dedicates his or her life to a pursuit of contemplative ideals and practices extreme self-denial or self-mortification for religious reasons [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. **Mahayana Buddhism**: the later of the two great schools of Buddhism, chiefly in China, Tibet and Japan, characterized by eclecticism (comprised from different sources) and a general belief in a common search for salvation, sometimes thought to be attainable through faith alone [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. **Parinivana**: freedom from the endless cycle of personal reincarnations, with their consequent suffering, as a result of the extinction of individual passion, hatred and delusion [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. **Deva**: a god or divinity [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. **Four Noble Truths**: the precepts that are the essence of the Buddha's teaching: that life is suffering, that desires cause suffering, that the annihilation of desires can relieve suffering, that the way to do this is by following the Four Noble Truths [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. **Reb Anderson**: senior Dharma teacher at the [San Francisco Zen Center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Zen_Center) and at [Green Gulch Farm Zen Center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Gulch_Farm_Zen_Center) in [Marin County, California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marin_County,_California), where he lives. He is considered one of the most prominent of contemporary Western Buddhist teachers. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. **Sanskrit**: an ancient language of India; the Vedas, Hinduism and an extensive philosophical and scientific literature dating from the beginning of the first millennium BC. It is the oldest recorded member of the Indic branch of the Indo-European family of languages; recognition of the existence of the Indo-European family arose in the 18th century from a comparison of Sanskrit with Greek and Latin. Although it is used only for religious purposes, it is one of the official languages of India [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. **Joss Stick:** a slender stick of dried, fragrant paste, burned by the Chinese as incense before a Joss (Chinese house idol or cult image) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. **Guru**: an intellectual or spiritual guide or leader [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. **Vassa**: the three-month annual retreat observed by Theravada Buddhists [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. **Diaspora:** those who have dispersed or spread across the world, as of people originally belonging to one nation or having a common culture [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. **Modicum**: a moderate or small amount [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. **Confucius**: Chinese name *Kong Zi* or *K'ung Fu-tse.*551–479 B.C.E, Chinese philosopher and teacher of ethics (see **Confucianism**). His doctrines were compiled after his death under the title *The Analects of Confucius* [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. **Meiji Era**, also known as the Meiji era, is a [Japanese era](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_era_name) which extended from October 23, 1868 to July 30, 1912. This period represents the first half of the [Empire of Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_of_Japan) during which Japanese society moved from being an isolated [feudal society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feudalism) to its modern form. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. **Geshe Kelsang Gyatso**: meditation master and internationally renowned teacher of Buddhism. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. **Dhyana**: he practice of meditation and concentration to attain enlightenment [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. **Retreatants**: those who takes part in a religious [retreat](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/retreat) [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. **Naraka or Niraya** are the terms usually employed in Buddhism and are comparable to western religions’ terms for ‘hell" (or "hell realm") or "purgatory" [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. **Taurus**: in astronomy,the Bull, represents a zodiacal constellation between Gemini and Aries, containing the bright star Aldebaran [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. **Ottoman**: former Turkish empire that was founded about 1300 by Osman, a Turkish emir 1299–1326: founder of the Ottoman dynasty, reaching its greatest territorial extent under Suleiman in the 16th century; collapsed after World War I. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. **Ankara**: second largest city in Turkey and its capital after the fall of the Ottoman empire. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. **Raphael Lemkin** (June 24, 1900 – August 28, 1959) was a [lawyer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawyer) of [Polonized](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polonization)-[Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish) descent who is best known for coining the word [*genocide*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide)and initiating the [Genocide Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide_Convention). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. **Liturgical**: of or relating to formal public worship [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. **Octave**: series or group of eight [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. **Crucifixion**: method of putting to death by nailing or binding to a wooden cross normally by the hands and feet and then standing the cross upright, causing extreme pain and eventual suffocation. This practice was widespread in the ancient world; ***The Crucifixion***: the crucifying of Jesus Christ at Calvary (outside the walls of Jerusalem), regarded by Christians as the culminating redemptive act of his ministry [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. **George Brown**: please see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Brown_(Canadian_politician)#Brown.27s_post-parliamentary_career> [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. **Misogyny**: hatred, dislike, or mistrust of women, or prejudice against women. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. **Genocide**: the deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political, or cultural group [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. **Catholic:** of or relating to a Catholic church, especially the Roman Catholic Church [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. **Nativity:** the birth of Jesus [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. **Saint**: a person of great holiness, virtue, or benevolence [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. **Vulgate**: the Latin version of the Bible, prepared chiefly by St. Jerome at the end of the 4th century A.D., and used as the authorized version of the Roman Catholic Church. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. **Canon**: the books of the Bible recognized by Christianity as genuine and inspired [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. **Iconology**: symbolic representation, especially the conventional meanings attached to an image or images. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. **St. John the Baptist**: Jewish itinerant preacher in the early first century AD. **John** is revered as a major religious figure in Christianity, Islam and the Bahá'í Faith [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. **Synoptic**: taking a common view: used chiefly in reference to the first four Gospels **(Synoptic Gospels)** Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, from their similarity in content, order, and statement. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. **Baptism**: a ceremonial immersion in water, or application of water, as an initiation into the Christian church [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. **Transfiguration**: Jesus and three of his apostles, Peter, James and John, go to a mountain (the [Mount of Transfiguration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_of_Transfiguration)) to pray. On the mountain, Jesus begins to shine with bright rays of light. Then the prophets [Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses) and [Elijah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah) appear next to him and he speaks with them. Jesus is then called "[Son](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_God)" by a voice in the sky, assumed to be [God the Father](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Father) [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. **Resurrection**: the rising of Jesus Christ after his death and burial (Easter). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. **Ascension**: the bodily ascending of Christ from earth to heaven [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. **Trinitarian:** believing in or adhering to the doctrine of the Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinityholds that God is three consubstantial persons — the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit (the animating force in all living creatures) [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. **Saint Mark the Evangelist** is the traditionally ascribed author of the [Gospel of Mark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mark), the second book of the New Testament in the Bible. Mark is said to have founded the [Church of Alexandria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Alexandria), one of the [most important](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentarchy) [episcopal sees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Episcopal_see) of [Early Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. **Water Blessed**: made sacred, holy; or sanctified [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. **Lenten**: an annual season of fasting and penitence in preparation for Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday and lasting 40 weekdays to Easter, observed by Roman Catholic, Anglican and certain other churches [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. **Mass**: participated in or performed by a large number of people, especially together in a group [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. **Candlelight Vigil**: devotional watching, or keeping awake, during the customary hours of sleep [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. **Golgotha**: a hill near Jerusalem where Jesus Christ was crucified; the hill is also referred to as Calvary [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. **Kyrie Eleison**: the brief response or petition in services in the Anglican Church, beginning with the words, “Lord, have mercy upon us” [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. **Dormition**: falling asleep; sleeping; figuratively, death [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. a Christian festival, observed on January 6, commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles in the persons of the Magi (the three wise men who visited Jesus on the occasion of his birth); the twelfth-day after Christmas [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. a sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality or essential meaning of something, usually initiated by some simple, homely, or commonplace occurrence or experience [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. an aromatic gum resin from various Asian and African trees of the genus *Boswellia,* especially *B. carteri,* used chiefly for burning as incense in religious or ceremonial practices, in perfumery, and in pharmaceutical and fumigating preparations [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. an aromatic resin from certain plants of the genus *Myrrhis,* especially *M. odorata,* a small spiny tree: used for incense, perfume, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. future; soon to be the thing specified [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. an event that is contrary to the established laws of nature and attributed to a supernatural cause; magic [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. the final 12 hours of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem during his crucifixion. The term passion originates from Latin where it means suffering and pain. However, Christian theology broadened it to include the love of Christ for mankind. Now, the passion of Christ means that he willingly suffered and died for us. The Passion of Christ begins from the time Judas (a disciple) betraying Christ, condemnation by the Pharisees and his appearance before Pontius Pilate. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Prayers, properly beginning at midnight, but sometimes beginning at daybreak. Also called **Morning Prayer** practiced by the Anglican Church. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. a religious service in the late afternoon or the evening. Archaic term literally meaning “evening”. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. embodied in flesh; given a bodily, especially a human, form [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. to make or declare sacred; set apart or dedicate to the service of a deity [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. The head of any of the ancient sees (seats of power) of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, or Jerusalem, within the Catholic Church [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. a sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality or essential meaning of something; a Christian festival, observed on January 6, commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles (non-Jews) in the persons of the Magi (the three wise men who paid homage to baby Jesus); Twelfth-day of Christmas [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. the Council of Tours was a Middle Ages Catholic assembly of high ranking members charged with the responsibility of setting policy and procedure for the church [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. not liable or subject to death; undying [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. asserting opinions in a doctrinaire or arrogant manner; opinionated [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. this acronym has been updated from the above text to the more inclusionary: LGBTT2SQQ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual,Two-Spirited, Queer and Questioning [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. in this context, *out* means “known to be so” [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. until May 17, 1992, homosexuality had been officially considered a mental illness by the World Health Organization. (see <http://ofl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014.05.17-STATEMENT-IntlDayHomophoebia.pdf> ) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. **Gwendolyn Ann Smith** Founder, U.S. Trans Advocacy and created Transgender Day of Remembrance; Gwen Smith is a transgendered woman living in the San Francisco Bay Area. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. favoured by fortune and prosperity [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. a member of the highest, or priestly, class among the Hindus [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. a red powder used ceremonially and cosmetically, especially by Hindu women to make a small distinctive mark on the forehead [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Hinduism, Buddhism,* a god(s) or divinity(s). In this context: Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati (parents of Ganesha) [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. In Hindu Mythology, the descent of a deity to the earth in an incarnate form or some manifest shape; the incarnation of a god. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. A person who is extremely [devoted](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/devote) to a religion; a follower [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. a spiny citrus tree, *Aegle marmelos,* of India [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. of or relating to the Aryans who settled in India c1500 b.c., or to their literature or religion [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. any of several books of esoteric doctrine regarding rituals, disciplines, meditation, etc., composed in the form of dialogues [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. roughly equivalent to prayers [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. **Tithi** - **Hindu Tithi** Calendar. As per the Indian **Hindu** Calendar, **Tithi** (also spelled Thithi) is the lunar date. A **tithi** is the time taken for the longitudinal angle between the moon and the sun to increase by 12°. A lunar month consists of 30 **tithis**, whose start time and duration vary. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Puja: a prayer ritual performed by Hindusof devotional worship of one or more deities [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. **Pecalang** are a type of local security officers of an administrative village in [Bali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bali), Indonesia. They are tasked with general security during large events. They work in coordination with two other groups – the H[ansip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hansip) and [Indonesian National Police](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesian_National_Police). Pecalang can be identified by their traditional and distinctive attire. It has been reported that some 22,000 Pecalang were deployed for [Nyepi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nyepi) celebrations in 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. an ancient race of India [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. A martial fraternity originated in 1699 and remaining as one of the closely knit communities of the Sikhs. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre, also known as the Amritsar massacre, took place on 13 April, 1919 when troops of the British Indian Army under the command of Colonel Reginald Dyer fired machine guns into a crowd of non-violent protesters, along with Baishaki pilgrims, who had gathered in Jalliamwala Bagh, Amritsar, Punjub The civilians, in the majority Sikhs, had assembled to participate in the annual Vaisakhi celebrations, a religious and cultural festival for Punjabi people and also to condemn the arrest and deportation of two national leaders, Satya Pal and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew. Coming from outside the city, many may have been unaware of the imposition of martial law.

    <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jallianwala_Bagh_massacre>. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. A Sikh temple in India. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Devotional singing, usually accompanied by musical instruments [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) [goddess](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devi) of knowledge, music, arts, wisdom, and learning worshipped throughout [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal) and [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. B.C.E.: before the common era; before the Christian Era

     B.C.: before Christ

     A.D. after the birth of Christ; anno Domini: in the year of our Lord [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. the sacred text of Islam, divided into 114 chapters, or suras: revered as the word of God, dictated to Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel and accepted as the foundation of Islamic law, religion, culture, and politics [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. a traditional account of things said or done by Muhammad or his companions [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. a city in and the capital of Hejaz, in West Saudi Arabia: birthplace of Muhammad; spiritual center of Islam [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. a small, cubical building in the courtyard of the Great Mosque at Mecca containing a sacred black stone: regarded by Muslims as the House of God and the objective of their pilgrimages [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. The *al-Ḥajaru al-Aswad*, ("Black Stone") is a rock set into the eastern corner of the [Kaaba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaaba), the ancient building located in the center of the [Grand Mosque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masjid_al-Haram) in [Mecca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mecca), [Saudi Arabia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia). It is revered by Muslims as an [Islamic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) relic which, according to Muslim tradition, dates back to the time of [Adam and Eve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_and_Eve) [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Kali is the Hindu Goddess who removes the ego and liberates the soul from the cycle of birth and death [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Guru Hargobind Ji 19 (June 1595 - 3 March 1644), revered as the *sixth* of ten Gurus of the [Sikh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikh) religion. He was barely eleven years old when he became Guru on 11 June 1606, after the execution of his father, [Guru Arjan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Arjan), by the Mughal emperor [Jahangir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jahangir). He initiated a military tradition within Sikhism to resist Islamic persecution and protect the freedom of religion and had the longest tenure as Guru, lasting 37 years, 9 months and 3 days. It is unclear why he was released from prison. Scholars suggest that Jahangir had more or less reverted to tolerant policies by about 1611 after he felt secure about his throne, and the Sunnis and Naqshbandhi court officials at the Mughal court had fallen out of his favour. Another theory states that Jahangir discovered the circumstances and felt Guru Hargobind was harmless, so he ordered his release [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. In the Jain tradition, it is believed that **Mahavira** was born in the early part of the 6th century BC into a royal family in what is now [Bihar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bihar), [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India). At the age of thirty, abandoning all worldly possessions, he left his home in pursuit of [spiritual awakening](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_awakening) and became an [ascetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asceticism). For the next twelve and a half years, Mahavira practiced intense meditation and severe austerities, after which he is believed to have attained [*Kevala Jnana*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kevala_Jnana)(omniscience). He preached for thirty years, and is believed by Jains to have died in the 6th century BC. Scholars such as [Karl Potter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Harrington_Potter) consider his biographical details as uncertain, with some suggesting he lived in the 5th century BC contemporaneously with the [Buddha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddha). Mahavira died at age 72, and his remains were cremated [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. worship of that which is venerated [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. One of 24 persons who have attained personal immortality through enlightenment [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. blissful happiness achieved through enlightenment [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. self-restraint or abstinence, especially in regard to sexual activity [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. money, food, or other donations given to the poor or needy; anything given as charity [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. an abbreviation for the word ***videlicet*** meaning: that is to say; namely (used especially to introduce examples, details,etc.) [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. **Charles Taze Russell** (February 16, 1852 – October 31, 1916), or **Pastor Russell**, was an American early 20th century Christian [restoration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restorationism_(Christian_primitivism)) [minister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_(Christianity)) from [Pittsburgh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pittsburgh), [Pennsylvania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania), and founder of what is now known as the [Bible Student movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_Student_movement). After his death, [Jehovah's Witnesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses) and numerous independent Bible Student groups developed from this base.

     In July 1879, Russell began publishing a monthly religious journal, [*Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Watchtower). In 1881 he co-founded [Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watch_Tower_Bible_and_Tract_Society_of_Pennsylvania) with [**William Henry Conley**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Henry_Conley) as president; in 1884 the corporation was officially registered, with Russell as president. Russell wrote many articles, books, tracts, pamphlets and sermons, totaling approximately 50,000 printed pages. From 1886 to 1904, he published a six-volume Bible study series originally entitled *Millennial Dawn*, later renamed [*Studies in the Scriptures*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Studies_in_the_Scriptures), nearly 20 million copies of which were printed and distributed around the world in several languages during his lifetime. A seventh volume was commissioned by his presidential successor: [**Joseph Rutherford**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Franklin_Rutherford), and published in 1917. The Watch Tower Society ceased publication of Russell's writings in 1927, though his books are still published by several independent groups.

     After Russell's death, a [crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watch_Tower_Society_presidency_dispute_(1917)) arose surrounding Rutherford's leadership of the society, culminating in a movement-wide schism; as many as three-quarters of the approximately 50,000 Bible Students who had been associating in 1917 had left by 1931. This shift resulted in the formation of several groups that retained variations on the name [*Bible Students*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_Student_movement). Those who maintained fellowship with the Watch Tower Society adopted the name *Jehovah's Witnesses* in 1931, while those who severed ties with the Society formed their own groups including the [Pastoral Bible Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastoral_Bible_Institute) in 1918, the [Laymen's Home Missionary Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laymen%27s_Home_Missionary_Movement) in 1919, and the [Dawn Bible Students Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawn_Bible_Students_Association) in 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. **Shun**: to keep away from (a place, person, object, etc.), from motives of dislike, caution, etc.; take pains to avoid [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. The **menorah** is described in the Bible as the “seven-lamp” (the lamp stem itself and its six branches), an ancient Hebrew lampstand made of pure gold and used in the [portable sanctuary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernacle_(Judaism)) set up by [Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses) in the wilderness and later in the [Temple in Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem). Fresh [olive oil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive_oil) of the purest quality was burned daily to light its lamps. The menorah has been a symbol of [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) since ancient times and is the emblem on the [coat of arms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_Arms_of_Israel) of the modern state of [Israel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel).

     See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menorah\_(Temple) [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. An eight-day Jewish festival beginning on Nisan 15 and celebrated in commemoration of the passing over or sparing of the Israelites inEgypt, when God smote the firstborn of the Egyptians (Exodus 12) [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. **Nyabinghi** is a Rastafari tradition pledging "love to all human beings" and non-violence, because they believe that only “Jah” (the Lord God) has the right to destroy. They make this pledge because of the power of words, believing that only when all of Jah's children make the pledge together, oppression will be destroyed. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. also, **Shintoism** the native religion of Japan, primarily a system of nature and ancestor worship: Japanese Buddhism [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. an acronym meaning U(nited) N(ations) E(ducational S(cientific) and C(ultural) O(rganization); an agency of the United Nations charged with instituting and administering programs for cooperative, coordinated action by member states in education, science, and the arts [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. a secret rendezvous of witches and sorcerers for the supposed worshiping of the Devil, associated with dances, feasting, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. The seasonal festivals, called *gahambars* (meaning "proper season"), occur six times a year. Due to the peculiarities of the *Shahenshahi* and *Kadmi* variants of the [Zoroastrian calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrian_calendar), in those variants the seasonal festivals are actually celebrated many months in advance and are therefore said to reflect the six "primordial creations" of [Ahura Mazda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura_Mazda), otherwise known as the [Amesha Spentas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amesha_Spenta). Each of these festivals is celebrated over five days. The six festivals with approximate dates are:

     * **Maidyozarem Gahambar** ('mid-spring' feast), Apr 30 - May 4
     * **Maidyoshahem Gahambar** ('mid-summer' feast), Jun 29 - Jul 3
     * **Paitishahem Gahambar** (feast of 'bringing in the harvest'), Sep 12 - Sep 16
     * **Ayathrem Gahambar** ('bringing home the herds'), Oct 12 - Oct 16
     * **Maidyarem** **Gahambar** ('mid-year'/winter feast), Dec 31 - Jan 4
     * **Hamaspathmaidyem** **Gahambar** (feast of 'all souls', literally 'coming of the whole group'), Mar 16 - Mar 20

     [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. **Jashan**: Zoroastrian Thanksgiving ceremony [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. **Rangoli**: an art form, originating in India in which patterns are created on the floor in living rooms or courtyards using materials such as colored rice, dry flour, colored sand or flower petals. It is usually made during [Diwali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali) or [Tihar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tihar_(festival)) (collectively known as Deepawali), [Onam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onam), [Pongal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pongal) and other Indian, Bangladeshi and Nepalese festivals related to [Hinduism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism). Designs are passed from one generation to the next, keeping both the art form and the tradition alive. The purpose of rangoli is decoration, and it is thought to bring good luck. Design depictions may also vary as they reflect traditions, folklore and practices that are unique to each area. It is traditionally done by women. Generally, this practice is showcased during occasions such as festivals, auspicious observances, marriage celebrations and other similar milestones and gatherings. In [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal), colourful rangoli are made from dyes and are lit up at night outside people’s homes and businesses. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. **Yazd:** a city in central Iran [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. **Avesta:** Zoroastrian Khorda **Avesta** (Book of Common **Prayer**) [↑](#footnote-ref-130)