

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES DESCRIPTIONS

JULY

The Martyrdom of the Bab, Baha'is observe the anniversary of the Bab's execution in Tabriz, Iran, in 1850.

Tisha B'Av is a fast that commemorates the destruction of the two holy and sacred Temples of the Jews destroyed by the Babylonians (in 586 B.C.E) and the Romans (in 70 C.E.) and other tragedies of Jewish history.

The birthday of Haile Selassie I, the Emperor of Ethiopia, who the Rastafarians consider to be God and their Savior.

Pioneer Day, observed by the Mormons to commemorate the arrival in 1847 of the first Latter Day Saints pioneer in Salt Lake Valley.

Asalha Puja Day or Dharma Day is a celebration of Buddha's first teachings.

AUGUST

Transfiguration, a holiday recognized by Orthodox Christians to celebrate when Jesus became radiant, and communed with Moses and Elijah on Mount Tabor. To celebrate, adherents have a feast.

Eid Al-Adha, Eid al-Adha is a four-day Islamic festival to commemorate the willingness of Ibrahim (also known as Abraham) to follow Allah's (God's) command to sacrifice his son Ismael. This is the Major Muslim Holiday and this is the time that Muslims perform Pilgrimage (Haj) in Saudi Arabia. Muslims around the world observe this event.

Buddhist Ghost Festival aka Hungry Ghost Festival, Ancestral worship by those practicing Taoism, where street, market, and temple ceremonies take place.

Raksha Bandhan, a Hindu holiday commemorating the loving kinship between a brother and a sister. Raksha means protection in Hindi, and symbolizes the longing a sister has to be protected by her brother. During the celebration, a sister ties a string around her brother's (or brother-figure's) wrist, and asks him to protect her. The brother usually gives the sister a gift and agrees to protect her for life.

SEPTEMBER

Krishna Janmashtami is a celebration of Lord Vishnu's most powerful human incarnations. The Hindu celebrations include praying and fasting.

Krishna Jayanti, the day Hindus celebrate Krishna's birthday, Vishnu's eighth incarnation on earth

Labor Day in the United States. Labor Day honors the contribution that laborers have made to the country and is observed on the first Monday of September.

Paryushana Parvarambha is a Jain festival lasting about 8-10 days, and is observed through meditation and fasting. Its main focus is spiritual upliftment, pursuit of salvation and gaining a deeper understanding of the religion.

The day Sikhs celebrate Sri Guru Granth Sahib who is their spiritual guide.

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year and marks the creation of the world. It begins shortly before sundown on the date prior to the one listed on the calendar.

Al-Hijra/Muharram (Islam New Year). This commemorate the date that prophet Muhammad was driven out of Mecca and followed God's command to immigrate to Madinah.

The Ethiopian New Year. Rastafarians celebrate the New Year on this date and believe that Ethiopia is their spiritual home.

Celebration of Ganesh is a huge community event lasting around 10 days, where the elephant-headed Hindu God is praised and given offerings.

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the Jewish year and is a day of atonement marked by fasting, prayer and repentance. It also begins shortly before sundown on the date prior to the one listed on the calendar.

Ashura, a holiday recognized by Muslims to mark the martyrdom of Hussain. It also commemorates the day Noah left the ark and Moses was saved from the Egyptians by God.

Mabon (Autumnal Equinox)

The Jewish Holiday of Sukkot is a seven-day festival which marks G-d's sheltering presence over the Jews during 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. It begins shortly before sundown on the date prior to the one listed on the calendar.

OCTOBER

Simchat Torah marks the conclusion of the weekly cycle of reading from the Torah. It acknowledges the words of the Torah being a circle, i.e. a never-ending cycle.

Shemini Atzeret is the Eighth day of Assembly and marks the conclusion of the Sukkot festival.

Marks the beginning of Dussehra (Dasera), a ten-day festival celebrated by Hindus to recognize Rama's victory over evil.

Dia de los Muertos is a Mexican holiday celebrated throughout Mexico, in particular Central and South regions, and by people of Mexican ancestry living in other places. This multi-day holiday focuses on gatherings of family and friends to pray for and remember friends and family members who have died, and help support their spiritual journey.

NOVEMBER

All Saints Day, which commemorates all known and unknown Christian saints. (In Eastern Christianity, the day is observed on the first Sunday after Pentecost.)

All Souls Day, which commemorates all faithful Christians who are now dead. In the Mexican tradition, the holiday is celebrated as Dia de los Muertos (October 31 and November 2), which is a time of remembrance for dead ancestors and a celebration of the continuity of life.

The Diwali, Hindu, Jain and Sikh five-day festival of lights celebrates new beginnings and the triumph of good over evil, lightness over darkness. (Indian)

The Birth of the Bab, a holiday celebrated by the Baha'i recognizing the birth of the founder of the Baha'i faith. This celebration starts on November 8 and ends November 9

The Birth of Baha'u'llah, a day on which members of the Baha'i faith celebrate the birthday of the founder of the Baha'i religion.

Eid Milad Un Nabi is the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. Parades, communal feasts in mosques, night-long prayers, and many other celebrations take place. It is mainly celebrated by Muslims in India.

Feast of Christ of King, Praise to God for the gift of time. Many party and feast to give thanks.

DECEMBER

Advent, Joyous preparation for the annual festive remembrance of the incarnation of Christ's birth. Wreaths and Advent calendars are hung, Jesse trees are pitched, and it is a time of prayer.

Feast Day at Our Lady of Guadalupe. This day commemorates the appearance of the Virgin Mary near Mexico City in 1531.

Celebrated for eight nights and days. Hanukkah marks the victory approximately 2,200 years ago the Maccabees over the Greek-Syrian ruler, Antiochus. During it, Jews light a Menorah, a special nine-branched candelabrum. It begins shortly before sundown on the date prior to the one listed on the calendar.

St. Lucia's Day. In Sweden, St Lucia was a young Christian girl who was martyred, killed for her faith, in 304 AD. She secretly brought food to persecuted Christians in Rome. She wore candles on her head so she had both her hands free to carry things. These stories were told by the Monks who brought Christmas to Sweden.

Las Posadas, a nine-day celebration in Mexico commemorating the trials Mary and Joseph endured during their journey to Bethlehem.

The Winter Solstice/ Yule. For Pagans and Wiccans, the shortest day of the year represents a celebration focusing on rebirth, renewal, and new beginnings as the sun makes way back to the earth. A solstice is an astronomical event that happens twice each year when the Sun reaches its highest position in the sky.

Christmas Eve, the eve before Jesus's birth.

Christmas, the day that Christians associate with Jesus's birth.

Kwanzaa, an African-American holiday started by Maulana Karenga in 1966 to celebrate universal African-American heritage.

JANUARY

Three King's Day- Epiphany recognizes the visit of the three wise men to the baby Jesus 12 days after his birth. The holiday is observed by both Eastern and Western churches.

Christmas for the Armenian Orthodox Christians who celebrate the birth of Jesus on Epiphany. (Armenians living in Israel celebrate Christmas on January 19.)

Christmas for Eastern Orthodox Christians, who celebrate Christmas 13 days later than other Christian churches, because they follow the Julian version of the Western calendar.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji's birthday, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs who initiated the Sikhs as the Khalsa (the pure ones), and is known as the Father of the Khalsa.

Bodhi Day, a holiday observed by Buddhists to commemorate Gautama's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, India.

Makar Sankranti is a major harvest festival celebrated in various parts of India.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. During the week, Christians pray for unity between all churches of the Christian faith.

World Religion Day is observed by those of the Baha'i faith to promote interfaith harmony and understanding.

Mahayana New Year is celebrated on the first full-moon day in January by members of the Mahayana Buddhist branch.

Tu B'Shvat is a Jewish holiday recognizing "The New Year of the Trees." It is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. In Israel, the flowering of the almond tree coincides with this holiday on which Jews eat various fruits.

FEBRUARY

Losar is the Tibetan Buddhist New Year, in which is a time of renewal through sacred and secular practices.

Nirvana Day, the commemoration of Buddha's death at the age of 80, when he reached the zenith of Nirvana. February 8 is an alternative date of observance.

Lantern Festival is the first significant feast after Chinese New Year, so called because the most important activity during the night of the event is watching various wonderful Chinese lanterns

Intercalary Days for people of the Baha'i faith. At this time, days are added to the Baha'i calendar to maintain their solar calendar. Intercalary days are observed with gift giving, special acts of charity, and preparation for the fasting that precedes the New Year.

MARCH

Baha'i Faith nineteen-day fast, meant to bring the person closer to God.

Maha Shivaratri, a Hindu holiday that honors Shiva, one of the Hindu deities.

Mardi Gras is the last day for Catholics to indulge—and often overindulge—before Ash Wednesday starts the sober weeks of fasting that come with Lent.

Ash Wednesday begins Lent, in Christian faith, seven weeks before Easter as a time observed by fasting, charity, and worship. Ashes mark foreheads as a display of atonement.

Eastern Orthodox Lent begins and lasts until April 27th. Also known as Great Lent or Great Fast, it is the most important fasting season as it leads up to a great feast on April 28th for Pascha (Easter).

St. Patrick's Day celebrates Ireland's patron saint, who brought Christianity to Ireland.

The Bahá'í New Year (Naw-Rúz) is celebrated on the vernal equinox. It is one of the nine Bahá'í holy days on which work is suspended.

Purim marks when the Jews of Persia were saved from annihilation. On Purim, Jews give charity and special gifts of food, participate in a festive meal, and read the Biblical book of Esther.

Ostara/ Eostre, a celebration of the spring equinox on March 21. Commemorated by Pagans and Wiccans, it is observed as a time to mark the coming of spring and fertility of land.

Holi, a Hindu and Sikh spring religious festival in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Holi is celebrated by throwing colored powder and water at each other. Bonfires are lit the day before commemorating the escape of young Prahlad when Demoness Holika carried him into fire.

Magha Puja Day, a Buddhist holiday when 1,250 enlightened saints, ordained by the Buddha, gathered to pay their respect to him. March 23 is the Lord's Supper, celebrated by Jehovah's Witnesses once a year after sundown on Nisan 14.

Jehovah's Witnesses- Memorial Day is Memorial of Christ's death. 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, an annual festival.

APRIL

Lailat-al-Miraj is a Muslim holiday that commemorates the Prophet Muhammad's night time journey from Mecca to the 'Farthest Mosque' in Jerusalem where he ascended to heaven, was purified, and given the instruction for Muslims to pray five times daily. Note that in the Muslim calendar, a holiday begins on the sunset of the previous day, so observing Muslims will celebrate Lailat al Miraj on the sunset of Tuesday, the 2nd of April.

Ugadi/Gudi Padwa (Hindu)

Buddha Day is a festival that marks Gautama Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. It falls on the day of the full moon in May and it is a gazetted holiday in India.

Buddha Day (Vesak or Visakha Puja), which marks the occasion of the birth, spiritual awakening and death of the historical Buddha.

Vaisakhi (also spelled Baisakhi) celebrates the founding of the Sikh community as the Khalsa (community of the initiated) and the birth of the Khalsa.

Ram Navami is when Hindus worship and celebrate the seventh avatar of Vishnu (Lord Rama). Devotees typically wear red and place extravagant flowers on the shrine of the God.

Palm Sunday, a holiday recognized by Christians to commemorate the entry of Jesus in Jerusalem. It is the last Sunday of Lent and the beginning of the Holy Week.

Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday, before Easter), which is the Christian holiday commemorating the Last Supper, at which Jesus and the Apostles were together for the last time before the Crucifixion.

Good Friday is celebrated by Christians to commemorate the execution of Jesus by crucifixion, and is recognized on the Friday before Easter.

Passover is an eight-day festival that commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. It begins before sundown on the date prior to the one noted on the calendar.

Lailat al Bara'a, also known as Barat, or Night of Forgiveness, is a time for sweets, time for charity, and most importantly, a time of focused prayer and worship.

The days during which members of the Bahai Faith celebrate the Festival of Ridvan, which commemorates the 12 days when Baha'u'llah, the prophet-founder, resided in a garden called Ridvan (Paradise) and publicly proclaimed His mission as God's messenger.

Easter, a Christian holiday recognizing Jesus's return from death after the crucifixion.

Armenian Martyrs' Day (also known as Genocide Remembrance Day) recognizes the genocide of appx. 1.5 million Turkish Armenians from 1915-1923.

Eastern Orthodox Holy Friday, or Holy and Great Friday, is observed with a strict fast within the overall Eastern Orthodox Lent leading up to Pascha on April 28th.

Pascha (Easter), is the Eastern Orthodox feast celebrating the resurrection of Christ and breaking the fast of Great Lent.

MAY

Beginning of Month of Ramadan. Since it is lunar month it varies between 28-30 days. Muslims who fast during this month refrain from eating, drinking, other activities from dawn to sunset. This is a time of great praise and worship through prayer and devotion to Islam. This holiday begins the evening prior to the first full day of activities.

Night of power (Laylat-al-Qadr in Arabic) is the holiest night of the year for Muslims, and is traditionally celebrated on the 27th day of Ramadan. It commemorates the night that the Quran was first started to be revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. This holiday begins the evening prior to the first full day of activities.

JUNE

Eid-al-Fitr is the second largest holiday for Muslims. It spans the first 3 days of the Islamic month of Shawwal Which follows the month of Ramadan. It marks the end of Ramadan, which is a month of fasting and more frequent prayer. Majority of Muslims attend communal EID prayers on the first day of the celebration, listen to a khutbah (sermon) and give zakat al-fitr (charity) during Eid al-Fitr. This holiday begins the evening prior to the first full day of activities.

Shavuot is a major Jewish festival held fifty days after the second day of Passover. It commemorates the giving of the Law (the Torah). This holiday begins before sundown on the date prior to the one noted on the calendar.

Pentecost is a Christian festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus after his Ascension, held on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

Sikhs observe the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev. Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Sikh guru and the first Sikh martyr.