

Iraq's Religious Festivities

Discover with us the Iraqi religious texture through this work, that introduce the religious festivities and occasions of the diverse Iraqi communities.



ISLAM

On an annual basis, Muslims observe two Eids. The first transpires subsequent to the fulfillment of the festive obligations throughout the holy month of Ramadan, whereas the latter transpires after the Hajj pilgrimage, the preeminent religious devotion mandated by Allah. Eids are occasions of festivity for Muslims, commemorating a divine recompense bestowed by Allah the Almighty upon His devotees in recognition of their enduring devotion and compliance with the prescribed religious duties, which encompass fasting and undertaking the Hajj pilgrimage.

Eid al-Fitr
Eid al-Fitr, also known as the Lesser Eid, is designated to last for a single day. It commences subsequent to sunset on the final day of the observance month of Ramadan and concludes at sunset on the initial day of Shawwal. The rationale for its legislation is to commemorate the nation of Muhammad; peace be upon him, on this jubilant occasion of the fast being broken. This day is designated 'Eid al-Fitr' in observance of the Muslims' break from fasting following a complete month-long period.

Eid al-Adha
This brings to mind the day when a Lord's benefits will be fully realized. It comes after the day when, while testing the largest of His creatures on the Day of Aurah in the sixth year of the Hijrah (migration), Allah revealed Himself to His Prophet, peace be upon him. "Today, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and I have chosen Islam as your religion," said Allah Almighty on this day (Quran, Al-Maidah: 3).

Islamic New Year or Hijri New Year
The first day of the month of Muharram, which is the Islamic calendar's start of the year, also happens to be the Islamic New Year. This is called the Hijri New Year, of course. This event marks the beginning of a new year according to the Islamic calendar and is observed in honor of the Prophet Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Medina, where he was received with great warmth.

The Noble Birth of the Prophet
One of the sacred holidays is the Noble Birth of the Prophet. Muslims celebrate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad on this day, which falls on the 12th of Rabi' Al-Awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar.

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CHRISTIANITY

Christian festivals, which are observed by adherents and the Church, are profoundly connected to the events of Jesus Christ's life, including His baptism and resurrection, as well as His birth and ascension. Owing to this correlation, Christian festivals are frequently denoted as "Maritime" or "Lenten" festivities. All traditional Apostolic Churches observe seven festivals, a designation that may have been influenced by the widespread belief that the number seven represents perfection. Certain holidays exhibit a yearly fluctuation in date, whereas others maintain fixed annual observance.

Christmas
Christians observe this holiday annually in December to commemorate the Nativity of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, where He was born to the Virgin Mary. Although all holiday celebrations evoke feelings of delight and jubilation, Christmas holds a unique aura that especially resonates with children. Families and the church bestow gifts upon children in remembrance of the presents delivered by the Magi. As per biblical accounts, these Eastern monarchs were directed to Bethlehem via a starry constellation, and it was in the manger of Bethlehem that they bestowed their gifts upon the infant child.

In churches that continue to use the Julian calendar, known as the Eastern calendar, for their liturgical schedule, Christmas is celebrated on January 7th according to the Gregorian (Western) calendar. This date corresponds to December 26th in the Eastern calendar. Put another way, all Churches celebrate Christmas on the December 25th, though the actual date varies depending on the calendar system they follow.

Epiphany (or Theophany)
This holiday, which is regularly observed on January 6th, honors John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus Christ. Families often decide to baptize their newborn infants on this day since it commemorates the baptism of Christ.

Easter
Easter, sometimes referred to as the "Great Feast," is the most significant Christian holiday that honors and celebrates Jesus Christ's resurrection after His crucifixion and burial. It is always on a Sunday, and important days in Jesus Christ's life come before it. These include Good Friday (sometimes called Holy Friday), the day of Jesus' crucifixion, Maundy Thursday, the night of Jesus' Last Supper with His followers, and Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, which commemorates Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.

Easter is preceded by the Lenten fast, during which Christians observe a forty-day period of fasting (excluding seven weeks, excluding Sundays, when fasting is traditionally not observed). This fast involves abstaining from animal products such as meat, dairy, and others. Given the significance of Easter in Christian faith, its celebration is reflected both in church rituals and in popular customs. These include traditions like egg coloring or exchanging family visits.

Since the date of Easter is linked to both the lunar and solar calendars, its date varies from year to year. The most common rule is that it falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox (March 21), usually occurring in the first half of April.

Ascension Day
This holiday is usually celebrated on a Thursday, forty days following Easter. It celebrates Jesus Christ's ascent into heaven. Swings are placed up on Ascension Day in many Christian communities as a symbol of the ascension to heaven, with people swinging as part of the celebration.

Feast of Pentecost
The feast of Pentecost is the Christian Feast of Pentecost, which traditionally commemorates on the Sunday that immediately succeeds a period of ten days, subsequent to Ascension Day. The Church observes this particular day as a commemoration of the event in which the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. The event signifies the realization of Christ's commitment to His followers, whereby He assured them of the forthcoming arrival of the Holy Spirit. The present day is often regarded as the inception of the early Christian Church.

Feast of the Transfiguration
The commemoration of this feast is consistently commemorated on the 6th of August each. The feast itself was as a commemorative feast of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ on Mount Sinai, which took place on Mount Tabor and is preserved in the collective memory of the Church.

Feast of the Cross
This annual feast celebrates Queen Helena's discovery of the cross upon which Jesus Christ was crucified on September 13th. It's a day when Christians celebrate the crucifixion as a symbol of redemption and redemption in their everyday lives. Crosses are often put on homes during this occasion.

Other Christian festivals, such as Palm Sunday, which comes on the Sunday before Easter Sunday, and the Feast of the Holy Trinity, which is celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost, are also observed. In the Palm Sunday ritual includes a ceremonial parade around the church accompanied by joyful songs and the involvement of adolescents, clergy, and chorists bearing olive branches. There is also the feast of Nusrat, meaning "Good feast," which falls on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost. On this day, believers traditionally sprinkle water on each other in homes, alleys, and open spaces. There is no specific ecclesiastical interpretation for this, but it is believed to be a folk heritage in Mesopotamia predating Christianity, which the people continued to practice even after embracing Christianity.

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IRAQI JEWS

In terms of the rituals performed by Iraqi Jews in their homeland, Judaism, like other faiths, has used various symbols to express their beliefs. The Hebrew calendar is based on the creation year as described in the Torah. For celebrations of monotheism, known as the "Shema," a statement spoken by members of the community during prayer, is perhaps the most important of these rites.

Yom Kippur
This takes place on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar and entails fasting from eating, drinking, and wearing leather shoes for twenty-five hours. It is also known as the Day of Atonement, during which sins are atoned for via the sacrifice of a goat.

Festivals hold great significance in the lives of religious communities. As members of a deeply rooted religious tradition, Jewish holidays carry special importance and celebratory rituals. Among these is the Festival of Booths (Sukkot), celebrated in the fall after the harvest has been gathered. The festival is marked by community members dwelling in temporary shelters, often set up in gardens or orchards, to commemorate the time spent in the wilderness.

Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)
The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, is observed on the first day of the seventh Hebrew month. It is celebrated as the anniversary of the creation of the universe in Jewish literature. This day also commemorates the building of Solomon's Temple and Moses' receipt of the Torah on Mount Sinai. There is a popular idea that the Messiah will emerge on Rosh Hashanah. On this day, people traditionally visit cemeteries in the morning.

Hanukkah (Festival of Lights)
This Jewish holiday commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple. During Hanukkah, candles are lit one by one during the eight days of the celebration, beginning with one candle on the first day, two on the second, and so on, concluding with eight candles on the eighth day. The Festival of Lights is named after the gradual increase in light.

Passover
Passover is one of the most significant yearly Jewish holidays, is also known as the Festival of Liberation, since the term Pesach (Passover) means 'to cross over.' On this night, each household kills a lamb to commemorate the Lord's initial sacrifice to rescue the Israelites; it also commemorates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt.

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BAHÁ'Í'S

The Bahá'í community observes nine holy days and festivals each year, during which they refrain from working. These events are seen as chances for community involvement and social connections and are celebrated with a variety of activities, including prayer, fasting, and social gatherings. As a result, people arrange public events and invites to commemorate these dates, performing prayers in a friendly and affectionate setting.

Among the most notable festivals is Nawroz, which marks the Bahá'í New Year and follows the month of fasting. The Festival of Ridhwan, known as the "Most Great Festival," spans 12 days between April and May, celebrating the anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation of His global mission in the Garden of Ridhwan in Baghdad in 1863, where He spent 12 days before leaving Baghdad. Another significant occasion is the Twin Holy Birthdays, commemorating the births of the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh, the central figures of the Bahá'í Faith.

Below is a list of Bahá'í observances and festivals, each with a brief description:

Holiday	Date	Description
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Nawroz - March 21
Celebrates the Bahá'í New Year, marking the end of the fasting.

First Day of Ridhwan - April 21
Commemorates Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His global mission aimed at human unity following His arrival at the Garden of Ridhwan in Baghdad in 1863.

Ninth Day of Ridhwan - April 29
Observes the arrival of the rest of Bahá'u'lláh's blessed family at the Garden of Ridhwan.

Twelfth Day of Ridhwan - May 2
Marks Bahá'u'lláh's departure from the Garden of Ridhwan towards Istanbul (Constantinople) in exile.

Declaration of the Bab - May 20
Celebrates the declaration by the Bab in 1844 of His divine mission, signaling the start of a new era and preparing the way for the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh.

Twin Holy Birthdays - October 22, 21
Birthdays of the Bab (born 1819) and Bahá'u'lláh (born 1817) celebrated together as one festival.

Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh - May 29
Commemorates the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh after approximately 40 years of imprisonment in Akká (Acre) in 1892.

Martyrdom of the Bab - July 9
Remembers the execution of the Bab in 1850 due to the forces of fanaticism after His imprisonment.

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SABIAN-MANDAICAN

The Mandaean Religious Festivals and Observances

Creation Day or The Great Feast (Dehwa Rabba)
The Mandaean New Year, which is celebrated during this occasion, is also called the "Beginning of Creation." Observed on the initial day of the Mandaean month of February (Dohra), this occasion commemorates the re-creation of the Earth and the formation of the sun, moon, and constellations. This event signifies the commencement of the Mandaean New Year and lasts for two days. This festival is mentioned in one of our sacred religious texts, "Tarsar Alf Shaila." The date of the festival shifts gradually towards winter by approximately a quarter of a day each year in relation to the Gregorian calendar. For instance, it was celebrated on July 2nd, 1999. During the festival, the Mandaeans commemorate the self-creation of (Mana Rabba) Himsif.

Shishan or Shoshyan Eid or Night of Power
This sacrament observance, which is also known as Eid Shishan, ensues subsequent to the Crowning Prayer. During the Night of Destiny, which occurs between the sixth and seventh day of the New Year, Mandaeans immerse themselves in flowing water for ritual purification. Numerous Mandaeans remain alert from the eve of this day until the early hours of the seventh, fervently supplicating and entreaty before the Living Lord, whose abode is praised. They hold the belief that the ascetic or true believer among them will experience the fulfillment of their aspirations on this night. In order to secure protection and blessings from the Creator, it is customary for Mandaean households to adorn their entrances with crowns that have been crafted.

The Festival of Prosperity or the Lesser Feast (Dehwa Henina)
The messenger angel Gabriel descended on this day and averted misadventure. The rivers were divided, plants were sown, and the Earth was meticulously prepared for the creation of Adam and Eve at the behest of the Almighty Living One; this represented the manifestation of life on Earth in accordance with the Creator's will. This celebration is for a single day.

The Festival of Upper Creation or Banja (Parwanaya)
The Earth honors the formation and development of the initial ethereal spirits and the realms of light. During this period, the portals of light are opened, and purified spirits and angels descend to Earth, integrating their light into the universe. During these days, the origin and dawn of the first created by the Great Living One are regarded as sacrament mysteries. This festival will be held for a period of five days.

The Golden Baptism Festival (Dehwa Ad Demana)
This festival commemorates the baptism of the divinely bestowed prophet Yahya (John), son of Zachariah, an angelic gift. His true name is honored. Following his baptism in the celestial realms of light, Adam and his progeny received the sacred ceremony, which was conducted under the guidance of the messenger angel Gabriel. The requisite ritual for attaining Mandaean status is baptism, and this celebration endures for a duration of one day.

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ZOROASTRIANISM (KAKAISM)

Zoroastrian Festivals
As of March 21st, the first, second, third, and fourth days of the Kurdish calendar month Khakhe Elaw are observed as Nawroz (New Year).

March 26th annually marks the birthday of the prophet Zoroaster.

The Water Festival (Awah), which occurs on the initial day of the Kurdish month of Poshbar, aligns with the onset of summer on or around June 21st.

The commencement of autumn, known as Mehragan or the Festival of Mitra, is observed on September 22nd, coinciding with the start of the Kurdish month Zazbar. This period is traditionally associated with the harvest of fruits.

The first day of the Kurdish month Nêbendan, which translates to "month of blocked roads due to snow," is January 21. The forty-first day of winter, when the days start to become longer, is celebrated on this day, which is called Zayn (Birth) Festival.

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YARSAANISM (KAKAISM)

Yarsanism encompasses a variety of festivals and momentous occasions, with the following being particularly noteworthy:

Nawroz Signifies the Onset of a New Year
Nawroz signifies the onset of a new year as per the Yarsani calendar and is a religious festival that commemorates the birth of Sultan Isahak, the deity responsible for revitalizing the Yarsani faith.

Khawankar Festival
This festival occurs three days after the autumnal fasting period.

Qultas Festival
This festival follows three days after the winter fasting period.

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