

January 2009

1.5 – Guru Gobind Singh’s Birthday (Sikh)

He was the 10th and last living Guru of the Sikh faith. He founded the ‘Khalsa’ brotherhood where the initiated adopted the five ‘K’s: Kangha (wooden comb), Kara (steel bracelets), Kirpan (sword), Kaccha (pair of shorts), and Kesh (long hair).

1.6 – Epiphany (Christian)

In the Western Church, this day celebrates the journey of the three Wise Men to Bethlehem to offer gifts to the infant Jesus. In the Eastern Church it is associated with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. On this day as well, the Armenians celebrate Christmas.

1.7 – Christmas (Christian – Coptic & Eastern Orthodox)

On this day, some Eastern churches celebrate the birth of Jesus according to the Julian calendar, which is currently 13 days behind the Gregorian or Western calendar.

1.7 – Ashura (Islam)

The tenth day of the first Islamic month (Muharram). For Shi’ite Muslims, this day mourns the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad. Devout Shi’a commemorate this day of sadness with retelling the story of the battle fought in Kerbala.

1.19 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (USA)

This day commemorates the leader of the “Civil Rights” movement in the USA. People of all races and religions have benefited from the sacrifices and accomplishments made by this great man. He was a Nobel Prize winner (Peace Prize 1964) and a prominent advocate of nonviolent protest. He was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

1.19 – Timkat / Theophany (Christian – Coptic & Eastern Orthodox)

The Eastern Orthodox Church associates Theophany with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

1.26 – Chinese New Year (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Buddhist)

2009 is the year of the Ox. This is the year 4707 in the Chinese Lunar calendar and the most important holiday. It is a three-day holiday in China and Hong Kong. The Chinese clean and decorate their homes with the 5 lucky signs of happiness and new clothes are worn.

February 2009

BLACK HISTORY MONTH – USA: The study of black history is greatly owed to Dr. Carter Woodson who first launched “Negro History Week” in 1962. Woodson chose February because it marks the birthdays of two men, President Abraham Lincoln, who freed slaves during the Civil War, and Frederick Douglass, a black who worked to end slavery. During this month, the contributions of Black Americans is recognized.

2.2 – Candlemas Day (Christian)

Candlemas celebrates the presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem 40 days after his birth. This day is now combined with candlelight marches in preparation for planting in the fields.

2.2 – Imbolg (Wicca)

'Imbolg' comes from an archaic Gaelic expression 'in the belly', which signaled the first stirrings of life within the womb of mother earth. Corn dolls are burned as offerings to the sun to hasten his return.

2.2 – Groundhog Day (Canada, USA)

Folklore suggests that if the groundhog sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter.

2.3 – Setsubun-Sai (Japan)

Setsubun-sai is known as Bean Throwing Night. Beans are thrown to protect against demons with shouts of "Devil out, Good Fortune in!"

2.9 – Tu B'Shevat (Jewish)

Tu B'Shevat, which means Arbor Day, celebrates Judaism's roots in the Natural World. It is a holiday and known as the New Year for Trees. Special meals include eating the seven fruits of the land – wheat, barley, figs, grapes, pomegranates, olives, and dates. Trees are also planted.

2.9-15 – Random Acts of Kindness Week (International)

Established in 1995, the movement inspires people to share kindness with one another as they discover for themselves what power it has to effect positive change as healthy relationships are created and community connections are nourished.

2.10 – Lantern Festival (China, Taiwan)

Marks the end of the Chinese New Year Celebrations.

2.14 – Valentine's Day (Canada, USA)

One version states that a priest named Valentine was martyred on February 14, 269 A.D. in Rome for secretly marrying couples against the orders of the Roman Emperor, Claudius II. This was the night before a festival called Lupercalia, associated with fertility. Probably both customs became associated with this day.

2.16 – Washington/Lincoln Day Observed (USA)

A US Federal holiday that celebrates the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln, born February 12, 1809, and George Washington, born February 22, 1732.

2.23 – Shivratri (Hindu)

On Shiva's night, the Hindu deity Lord Shiva performed the Tandav, the cosmic dance of creation and destruction. A 24-hour fast is kept and devotees make pilgrimages to major shrines for worship.

2.24 – Shrove Tuesday (Christian)

This is the day before Lent. Taken from the old word 'shrive', it means forgiveness. Traditionally it was a time to give up meat and dairy foods.

2.24 – Carnival Parade (Brazil, Chile, Spain)

A two-day celebration before Ash Wednesday. It is called the Mardi Gras in Brazil.

2.25 – Ash Wednesday; Lent Begins (Christian)

This day marks the beginning of Lent. Ash symbolizes sorrow for wrong doings and foreheads of churchgoers are marked with the shape of the cross with ashes as a sign of penitence.

2.26 – Intercalary Days (Baha'i)

Lasting until March 1, these four or five days are inserted into the calendar called Ayyam-i-ha, adjusting the Baha'i year to the solar cycle. This precedes a month of fasting from March 2 – 20. Gifts are exchanged, parties and public meetings are held to share the faith.

March 2009

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH – USA: The first organized march by women who were garment workers in New York was held in 1857 to fight for their right to vote. This event evolved to the creation of the first International Women's Day on 28 February, 1909 in the USA. It is commemorated at the United Nations and by women's groups around the world on March 8th. Women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, come together to celebrate this month, and review how far they have come in their struggle for equality, peace, and development. The right to vote of American women was achieved in 1920.

3.2 – Great Lent Begins (Christian – Coptic & Eastern Orthodox)

Clean Monday is the beginning of the forty-day fast when Christians imitate Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness before his crucifixion.

3.2 – Alá (Baha'i)

The nineteenth and final month in the Baha'i calendar and the time of the 19-day fast in preparation of their new year.

3.8 – International Women's Day (UN)

According to one source, a women's march in New York in 1857 provided the inspiration for the day. Others claim that it began as a commemoration of a strike by women needle trades workers in New York City in 1908. International Women's Day was revived in the 1960s and in 1975 the U.N. began sponsoring this day.

3.9 – Eid-Maulad-un-Nabi (Islam)

Birthday of Prophet Muhammad. Since no one really knows when Muhammad was born, the date of his death has been adopted as the day of his birth. It is observed differently in the various Muslim countries for 9 days, with colorful fairs, parades and feasting.

3.10 – Purim (Jewish)

Purim is known as the Feast of the Lots, which celebrates the deliverance of Jews in Persia from the machinations of Haman. Jews dress in costume and give gifts of food to each other. This festival of color celebrates Spring, where people play with liquid and powdered colors, light bonfires, and blow horns to celebrate the destruction of Hoika.

3.12 – Hola Mohalla (Sikh)

Mock Battles are fought and martial arts are displayed in honor of Guru Gobind Singh, who took to armed struggle against tyranny.

3.17 – St. Patrick's Day (Ireland)

The death anniversary of the patron saint of Ireland. He used the three-leaved shamrock to explain the Christian idea of the Holy Trinity, thus the idea of wearing a shamrock.

3.20 = Ohigon (Japan, Korea)

During the time of the Spring Equinox, Buddhists meditate on the harmony of the universe.

3.20 – Shunki-Sorei-Sai (Shinto)

Ancestors are given reverence at home altars and considered active members of the living family. Gravesites are cleaned and purified.

3.20 – Eostre (Wicca)

A fertility festival celebrating the birth of Spring. The word Easter is derived from the Maiden Goddess. Celebrations include lighting fires at sunrise, ringing bells, and decorating hard-boiled eggs, an ancient Pagan custom associated with the Goddess.

3.21 – Now Ruz (Zoroastrian, Afghanistan, Islam, Ismaili, Baha’I, Iran)

The New Year festival, which means ‘new day’ is celebrated by Muslims of Persian heritage or influenced and by all Ismaili Muslims around the world. The Zoroastrian New Year celebrates the creation of fire on this day on which Zarathustra received his revelation.

3.26 – Birth of Prophet Zarathustra (Zoroastrian)

Zarathushtra (Zoroaster in Greek; Zarthosht in India and Persia) is the founder of the Zoroastrian religion dating back to sometime around 800 A.D.

April 2009

4.5 – Palm Sunday (Christian)

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and was cheered by crowds who strew palm branches in his path. It is observed by worship services and parades using palm branches.

4.7 – Mahavira Jayanti (Jain)

This day celebrates the birthday of Lord Mahavira who was the 24th leader of the Jain religion and born around 599 B.C.

4.9 – Pesach/Passover (Jewish)

This time period, lasting through April 16, commemorates the time of Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. It begins with a ritual meal ‘Seder’ when no leavened bread is consumed and is celebrated for eight days with special prayers and symbolic foods.

4.9 – Maundy Thursday (Christian)

On this day, Jesus ate the Last Supper and washed the feet of his disciples prior to his arrest and crucifixion.

4.10 – Good Friday (Christian)

This day commemorates the passion and death by crucifixion of Jesus and is a solemn day. Eastern Orthodox members fast, Macedonians make a plashtanitsa or picture of the dead Jesus on a large cloth to be carried in a procession, Italian Catholics have a procession called the Way of the Cross.

4.12 – Easter (Christian)

This day celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from his grave. Most Christians welcome Easter Sunday with a sunrise service.

4.13 – Baisakhi (Bangladesh, Sikh, Hindu)

The first day of the solar year, this is an agricultural festival celebrating the harvest especially in North India. In Kerala, South India this day is called Vishu. Especially important to the Sikhs, it marks this day in 1699, when the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, established the order of 'Khalsa'. The festival is a mixture of feasting, dancing and worship.

4.13 – Songkran/New Year (Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand)

In Southeast Asia, Songkran is recognized as the New Year for Buddhists. For Thais, it is a 3 day religious festival in which homes are routinely cleaned, and water is sprinkled on monks paying visits and on statues of Buddha.

4.22 – Earth Day (International)

Earth Day is celebrated around the world and events such as festivals and rallies are often organized for the weekends before or after April 22. Many communities also celebrate Earth Month by organizing a series of environmental activities throughout the month of April.

4.23 – Administrative Professionals Day (Canada, USA)

On this day, workplaces all over the country acknowledge secretaries, administrative staff and other support personnel.

4.24 – Daughter/Son to Work Day (USA)

Parents are encouraged to bring their daughters (and/or sons) to work on this day, and to use this opportunity to educate their children on the nature of employment.

4.25 – Arbor Day (USA)

Communities across the United States plant trees in an ongoing effort to conserve American forests.

4.28 – HaZikaron 'Memorial Day' (Israel)

This is Israel's Memorial Day honoring soldiers who died fighting for their country.

May 2009

NATIONAL ASIAN/PACIFIC HERITAGE MONTH – USA: It was enacted on October 28, 1992. The purpose of the law was to honor the achievements of Asia/Pacific Americans and to recognize their contributions to the United States. This recognition was the culmination of an earlier Resolution passed on October 2, 1978 when 'Asian Pacific American heritage Week' was declared. May was selected for the recognition because two significant events: Japanese immigrants first arrived in the United States in May, and the transcontinental railroad was completed in May.

NATIONAL OLDER PEOPLES MONTH – USA: It was established by presidential proclamation in 1963. The entire nation is encouraged to pay tribute in some way to older persons in their communities. It is celebrated across the country through ceremonies and events.

5.1 – Beltane (Wicca)

Greets the summer. It takes its name from the Celtic God Bel who mates with the Earth Goddess on this day. It was a midsummer fertility festival in Celtic paganism. Maypole dances are presently held.

5.2 – Buddha's Birthday (Hong Kong)

Buddhism, the fourth largest religion in the world, being exceeded in numbers only by Christianity, Islam and Hinduism was founded in Northern India by the first known Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. In 535 BE he attained enlightenment and assumed the title Lord Buddha (one who has awakened).

5.5 – Cinco De Mayo (Mexico)

It marks the victory of the Mexican Army over the French at the 'Batalla de Puebla' in 1862. Although the Mexican army was eventually defeated, it came to represent a symbol of Mexican unity and patriotism. It is celebrated on a much larger scale in the United States than it is in Mexico. People of Mexican descent (Chicanos) in the United States celebrate this significant day by having parades, mariachi music, folkloric dancing and other festive activities.

5.9 – Wesak (Buddhist)

The most important Buddhist festival, Wesak celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha as one event. Different cultures observe this day with different customs, for example, Sri Lankans light lanterns, Vietnamese purchase captive animals and release them, and Koreans host a lantern parade.

5.10 – Mother's Day (Australia, Canada, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, USA, Denmark)

In 1914, the second Sunday in May was officially declared Mother's Day by President Wilson. Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia first suggested a day on which to honor mothers and motherhood.

5.22 – Yom Yerushalyim (Israel)

This day marks the anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem.

5.23 – Declaration of the Báb (Baha'i)

The Baha'I faith began in Persia (now Iran) on this day in 1844, by the prophet Báb who announced his mission as the founder. The event is celebrated about two hours after sunset.

5.25 – Memorial Day (USA)

A day of remembrance for those who have died in service to their country. The 3rd U.S. Infantry place small American flags at about 260,000 gravestones at Arlington National Cemetery.

5.29 – Shavout (Jewish)

Running through May 30th, this holiday called the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, which means 50 and therefore celebrated on the 50th day at the end of Passover. Shavout celebrates the time when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

5.29 – Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh (Baha'i)

The prophet and founder of the Baha'I faith passed away near Haifa, Israel. The event is observed at the actual time of his passing at 3am.

June 2009

GAY AND LESBIAN PRIDE MONTH – Canada, USA, Australia: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Pride Events are celebrated by communities across Canada and the United States on different dates during June through to early August. There is a Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney, Australia annually in February/March. During this time people find that they are not alone and can take pride in their community's history. The three0day Stonewall Rebellion was a landmark event forcing equality for the community under the law. In 1999, Gay and Lesbian Month was made a national celebration by presidential proclamation.

6.5-7 – Red Earth Native American Fair (Aboriginal/Native American)

A Cultural Festival which takes place in Oklahoma City for 3 days. Over 150 Native tribes from the U.S. and Canada gather in Downtown Oklahoma City to share and participate in their rich and diverse heritage through highest quality original art, drum and dance juried competitions.

6.7 – Pentecost (Christian – Coptic & Eastern Orthodox)

The Holy Spirit was felt amongst the 12 apostles after Jesus' death. New members of the church are baptized on this day. It is called White Sunday because white clothes are worn for baptism.

6.11 – King Kamehameha Day (Hawaii)

A national state holiday to honor the first ruler of the United Hawaiian Islands.

6.14 – Flag Day (USA)

A day chosen by the Continental Congress in 1777 to honor the flag as a symbol of patriotism. Its 13 red and white stripes represent the original colonies, while its 50 stars stand for the separate but united states of the Union. Flags are flown over all schools, statehouses, courtrooms and churches.

6.16 – Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (Sikh)

He was the fifth Guru (1563-1606) and the first Sikh martyr executed by the Mughal emperor Jehangir. He built the Golden Temple in Amritsar with doors facing all four directions to emphasize that the Sikh way was open to all, regardless of caste.

6.19 – Juneteenth (USA)

June 19, 1865, also known as National Freedom Day, is considered the official end of slavery in the United States. Slaves in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas were not told about their freedom until this day, even though other Southern states had known since April, 1863. Today, the holiday is observed in African-American communities throughout the country with rallies, concerts and fairs.

6.21 – Litha (Wicca)

Litha falls on the summer solstice. The Latin word solstice means 'the sun stood still'. Wiccans celebrate the Sun at the height of its power providing food harvests.

6.21 – Father's Day (Canada, USA, UK)

This day honors all fathers in the world. Louise Dodd of Spokane, Washington, began the tradition in 1909.

6.23 – African Liberation Day (International)

It has been a day of celebration of the many achievements and victories of African people worldwide and a rededication to their current struggle for freedom, justice and unity. It is marked by parades and rallies in Africa and the U.S.

6.28 – Dragon Boat Festival (China)

This day honors the patriot poet Chu Yuan who drowned himself in the Milo River, south of China in protest of the political injustice in 277 B.C.

6.28 – Stonewall Rebellion Day (Gay & Lesbian)

This day commemorates the U.S. anniversary of the protest against police harassment in New York City's Greenwich Village in 1969. The event has been commemorated by a Pride Parade each year in New York City on the last Sunday in June. Events and Pride Parades are held in many metropolitan cities throughout the United States and Canada.

July 2009

7.1 – Canada Day (Canada)

On July 1, 1867, the British North America Act created the Canadian federal government. The BNA proclaimed one dominion under the name of Canada, hence the original title of the holiday 'Dominion Day'. Dominion Day was officially renamed 'Canada Day' by an act of Parliament on October 27, 1983.

7.4 – Independence Day (USA)

In 1776, the 13 Colonies signed the declaration of Independence proclaiming their separation from England and formed the United States of America. It is celebrated with picnics, fireworks, parades and outdoor activities.

7.6 – Dalai Lama's Birthday (Tibet)

His Holiness the XVIth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. Born to a peasant family in Northeastern Tibet, he was recognized as the 14th Dalai Lama (Mongolian for 'Ocean of Wisdom').

7.7 – Wassana (Buddhist)

This day marks the beginning of the 3-month 'Rains Retreat' for self-examination and peace-making for monks and nuns. It also celebrates Buddha's first teaching.

7.9 – Martyrdom of the Bab (Baha'i)

The Bab was executed at the age of 31 by a firing squad in Tabriz in 1850 C.E. The event is observed at noon. Work and commerce are suspended on this day.

7.11 – Imamat Day (Islam Ismaili)

Imamat Day is celebrated every year by Ismailis on the day that the Imamat or religious leader transferred from the past Imam to the present Aga Khan.

7.17 – Munoz-Rivera Day (Puerto Rico)

This day celebrates the anniversary of Luis Munoz-Rivera.

7.20 – Umi no hi (Japan)

Japanese honor the importance of the sea and its role in Japanese history on this day.

7.24 – Simon Bolivar Day (Venezuela, Ecuador)

Simon Bolivar (1783-1830) was one of South America's greatest generals. His victories over the Spaniards won independence for Bolivia, Panama, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. He is called El Libertador and the 'George Washington' of South America.

7.30 – Tisha B'av (Jewish)

Jews mourn the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem in 586 B.C. E. and 70 C.E. It is a day of mourning and fasting.

August 2009

8.1 – Lughnasad (Wicca)

Its name is taken from the Celtic God Lugh, or Samildanach, which means 'he of many gifts'. It celebrates the ancient festival of the first harvesting of grain in August.

8.5 – Raksha Bandhan (Hindu)

According to legend, God Indra was warring with demons. His wife tied a silk charm around his wrist to protect him and he was able to defeat his enemies. Hindu girls now tie a treaded amulet or 'rakhi' on their brothers for protection against evil.

8.6 – Hiroshima Day (Canada, USA)

This solemn day commemorates the day that the United States dropped the first atomic bomb in Hiroshima, Japan in 1945. People from different backgrounds untie on this day to declare their commitment to never letting another nuclear bomb be used against humans again.

8.13 – Obon (Japan)

This day is celebrated in honor of deceased ancestors. Japanese light lanterns and hold circular folk dances.

8.13 – Chung Yuan Festival (China)

Known as Feast of Lanterns by Japanese Buddhists. Prayer services are held to remember their ancestors, food is offered to them, lanterns are floated down rivers or the sea to guide their spirits back to the other world.

8.13 – VuLan (Vietnam)

Known as Wandering Souls Day, offerings of food are prepared, shoes and dressed made of paper along with votive papers are burned in homes and pagodas for the dead and for the wandering souls who have no families.

8.14 – Janmashtami (Hindu)

Celebrates the birth of Lord Krishna and his rescue from potential death by the demon Kasha. Lord Krishna was born in a prison, then carried by his father to another village where he was secretly exchanged with a cow herder's daughter for his safety.

8.15 – Assumption (Christian)

This refers to Mary's death and ascent to heaven and is celebrated by Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Special mentions: Sicilian-Canadians hold an outdoor procession for the for the Madonna del Assunta, Polish-Canadians celebrate the Feast of the Mother of God of the herbs, an early harvest festival, Armenian Orthodox bless the first grapes of the season, Ukrainians take flowers to the church to be blessed.

8.17 – Paryushana-Parva (Jain)

Celebrated for eight days, Paryushana-Parva is the holiest time of the year and is marked by fasting and worship of the 24 realized teachers of the Jain faith known as Tirthankaras or Jains.

8.22 – Ramadan Begins (Islam)

Lasting through September 19, Ramadan is the holiest period in the Islamic Year and begins at the sighting of the new moon. It commemorates the period during which Prophet Mohammad received divine revelations. Observing Muslims fast between the hours of sunrise and sunset during the entire month, read the Quran and worship in the mosque or at home.

8.23 – Dashalakshani-Parva (Jain)

Celebrated by the Digambara sect and lasting ten days, each day dedicated to a virtue: humility, honesty, purity, forgiveness, truthfulness, self-restraint, asceticism, study, celibacy and detachment.

8.23 – Ganesh Chaturthi (Hindu)

It is in honor of one of Hindu's major deities, Ganesh, the elephant-headed god. He is known as the 'remover of all obstacles' and is invoked at the beginning of all new undertakings.

September 2009

NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH (Until October 15) – USA: it was initiated in 1968 as 'National Hispanic Heritage Week', it was established in 1988 by the U.S. Congress, and includes the days between September 15 through October 15. Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15 because this day marks the anniversary of independence for five Hispanic countries – Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico achieved independence on September 16, and Chile on September 18. Latinos from all across the nation take a moment to reflect upon their history, customs and culture, as well as the contributions their people have made.

9.7 – Labor Day (Canada, USA)

On June 29, 1894, the U.S. Congress voted Labor Day as a National Holiday to honor working people's contribution on labor. The day is celebrated with parades and speeches.

9.11 – Day of Remembrance (USA)

The effects of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001 impacted Americans and most other nations and has brought us to focus on the devastation terrorism has caused in the world.

9.16 – Laylat al-Qadr (Islam)

Beginning in the evening and meaning 'Night of Power', this commemorates the revelation of the Qu'ran to Prophet Muhammad in 610 C.E.

9.16 – Dia de la Independencia (Mexico)

Mexican Independence Day. Mexico and other Central American countries declared their independence from Spain on this date in 1821. Hispanics celebrate Independence Day with craft displays and regional dances.

9.19 – Rosh Hashanah/New Year (Jewish)

Lasting through September 20th and literally meaning ‘Head of the Year’ Rosh Hashanah marks the first and second day of the Jewish New Year and the anniversary of the creation of the world. It begins at sundown the night before and ends 10 days later with Yom Kippur. It is celebrated with prayers and religious services.

9.19 – Navratri (Hindu)

Navratri means ‘nine nights’ starting on the new moon and ending of Dussehra. It is dedicated to the goddess Durga who had nine incarnations and has the power of good to destroy demons.

9.21 – Eid-ul-Fitr (Islam)

This day marks the end of the Ramadan fast and is celebrated for 3 days. Date of observance may vary according to sighting of new moon.

9.22 – Mabon (Wicca)

This day celebrates the fall equinox and the end of the harvest season. Apples are juiced for cider and grapes for wine.

9.22 – Shubun no hi (Japan, Shinto)

On this Autumnal Equinox Day, the Japanese honor family ancestry, visiting ancestral graves, and have family reunions.

9.24 – Durga Puja (Hindu)

This day celebrates the divine creative force of the universe and honors the 10-armed goddess Durga, wife of Shiva, and the destroyer of demons.

9.27 – Mashiyat “11th Month” (Baha’i)

The first day of the eleventh Baha’i month. The English translation of Mashiyat (Arabic) is Will.

9.28 – Yom Kippur (Jewish)

The Day of Atonement is the holiest and most solemn of all days in the Jewish year. They believe that once you atone for your mistakes, you can be ‘at one’ with God. Jews do not work, and fast from sunset to sunset.

9.28 – Dussehra (Hindu)

Dussehra means ‘the tenth’ and celebrates the triumph of Lord Ram over the demon Ravan who stole his wife Sita. The great Hindu epic poem, the Ramayana is read and enacted, called Ram Lila. A big effigy of Ravan is burnt accompanied by fireworks.

October 2009

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH – USA: It began with the Presidential Proclamation in 1988. This law replaced ‘National Employ the Handicapped Week’ which had occurred annually since 1945 during the first week of October. The new law also recognized a change in terminology and replaced the term ‘handicap’ with ‘disability’.

10.2 – Gandhi’s Birthday (India)

Mahatma Gandhi is the National Father of India who adopted ‘non-violence’ in fighting for freedom of the country.

10.3 – Sukkot (Jewish)

Also known as the Feast of Booths, Sukkot is a joyful harvest festival lasting 9 days. A little hut called 'sukkah' is built outdoors where families eat to remember the time Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years, sleeping and eating under the stars.

10.3 – Harvest Moon Festival (China, Hong Kong, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan)

The festival is celebrated with family reunions, moon gazing and eating of moon cakes. In Vietnam, it is called 'Trung Thu'. On that night children form a procession and travel through the streets with bright lanterns, singing and dancing to the beat of drums. In Korea it is called 'Chusok'.

10.4 – Pavarana (Buddhist)

Buddha went into intensive practice during the rainy season. This marks the end of the retreat.

10.8 – Karva Chauth (Hindu)

A one-day fast kept by married Hindu women for the well-being and longevity of their husbands. The husbands feed the first bite to their wives only after they see the moon.

10.10 – Shemini Atzeret (Jewish)

On the eighth day of Sukkot, special prayers for rain are offered.

10.11 – Simchat Torah (Jewish)

Simchat Torah or Rejoicing in the Torah is the beginning of the synagogue's annual reading cycle. It begins the previous day at sundown.

10.11 – Coming Out Day (Gay and Lesbian – USA)

The first National Coming Out Day was held on October 11, 1988. It is an international event which gives gay, lesbian and bisexual people the opportunity to 'come out' to others about their sexuality.

10.12 – Thanksgiving (Canada)

Early Canadian settlers gave thanks for good harvests by decorating their churches with fruits and vegetables and celebrated dinner with venison and waterfowl.

10.12 – Columbus Day Observed (USA)

This day commemorates the anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of the New World.

10.12 – Dia de la Raza (Mexico)

This day celebrates the Hispanic and Latino heritage in the Americas.

10.16 – National Boss Day (Canada, USA)

A day dedicated to appreciate our supervisors at work.

10.17 – Diwali (Sikh, Hindu)

It means 'row of lights' and is the Hindu New Year. On this day Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, visits homes lit by lamps.

10.17 – Mahavira Nirvana (Jain)

This day celebrates the attainment of Moksha by Lord Mahavira and is the 'Festival of Lamps'.

10.31 – Samhain (Wicca)

Traditionally, animals were slaughtered for winter provisions and the spirits of those who have died in the last year are invited to a final celebration.

10.31 – Halloween (Canada, USA)

This tradition goes back to the Celtic people 2,000 years ago who celebrated their New Year in late autumn and honored Samhain or Lord of the Dead. They put candles on windows and lit bonfires to scare the disembodied spirits off. They wore disguises so as not to be recognized and always carried a lantern carved out of turnips or potatoes, but in North America they used pumpkins, which were more readily available.

November 2009

11.1 – All Saints' Day (Christian)

This day is for honoring all saints, known and unknown.

11.1 – Dia de Finades (Portugal)

This holiday is celebrated by people visiting the deceased. They bring hearts and crowns made of flowers to the graves.

11.2 – Guru Nanak's Birthday (Sikh)

Also called Bikarami, this day celebrated the birth of Guru Nanak. Born in 1469 C.E. he was the first of the Ten Gurus of the Sikh faith and founded Sikhism. An accomplished poet, 974 of his hymns are in the Sikh scriptures, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

11.2 – Kathina (Buddhist)

New robes and necessities are given to ordained monks and nuns on this day.

11.2 – Dia de los Muertos (Mexico)

This day is also known as the Day of the Dead, it is celebrated in parts of the United States and Central America. Families build altars in their homes surrounded with flowers, food and burning candles.

11.11 – Remembrance Day (Canada, UK)

This day commemorates the soldiers killed in World Wars I and II. Canadians always set aside this day in memory of those who gave their lives for freedom. Many observers wear red poppies as a symbol of this day.

11.11 – Veterans Day (USA)

It was first proclaimed as Armistice Day in 1918 to commemorate the termination (at 11am on November 11, 1918) of World War I.

11.12 – Birth of Baha u llah (Baha'i)

Born Mirza Husayn 'Ali into one of the leading noble families of Persia in 1817. His name is a title, in Arabic, meaning 'The Glory of God'.

11.13 – International World Kindness Day (International)

The spark for World Kindness Day was lit at the Second Conference of the World Kindness Movement in November 1997 in Japan. Starting as random acts of kindness, the movement now has members in over 17 countries including the USA and Canada. The movement is committed to building a global organization dedicated to inspire and promote kindness.

11.20 – Transgender Day of Remembrance (USA)

Began in 1999, vigils, services and a variety of other events are held to mark this day set aside to memorialize those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice.

11.26 – Thanksgiving Day (USA)

Early American settlers gave thanks for good harvests by decorating their churches with fruits and vegetables and celebrated dinner with venison and waterfowl.

11.26 – Day of Hajj / Day of Arafat (Islam)

Muslims perform the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The pilgrimage is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. All Muslims are expected to perform the Hajj at least once in their lifetime. About 6 million Muslims from over 70 countries journey to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. In one of the rites of the Hajj, pilgrims move in a circular, counterclockwise procession around the Ka'bah.

11.28 – Eid-ul-Adha (Islam)

This day concludes the Hajj and is the start of a 3-day festival celebrating Abraham's test of obedience to Allah when he was asked to sacrifice his own son Ismael. At the last minute, Allah replaces Ismael with a lamb.

11.28 – Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha'I (Baha'i)

After years of serving his father and safeguarding the unity of the Faith, Abdu'l-Baha'I passed away in Haifa, Israel in 1921.

11.29 – First Sunday of Advent (Christian)

The Christian church year begins with Advent (from the Latin *adventus*, meaning coming or arrival) which is also a time when Christians prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ.

December 2009

12.1 – World AIDS Day (UN)

This day is designated by the World Health Organization and the United Nations to increase awareness and education of AIDS. Today, over 41 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.

12.1 – Rosa Parks Day (USA)

This day commemorates the arrest of Rosa Parks, in 1955, for defying segregation by refusing to give up her seat on the bus for a white passenger. The incident led to the end of segregation.

12.6 – St. Nicholas Day (Christian)

St. Nicholas is the patron saint of Russia and came from a town in Turkey. Being known as a protector of children, the tradition of leaving shoes out in the hope of receiving treats is practiced in the Dutch, German and Eastern European communities.

12.7 – Pearl Harbor Day (USA)

This day commemorates the attack of the Imperial Japanese Navy and Air Force on the armed forces of the United States stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, killing two thousand people. This caused the United States to enter into World War II.

12.12 – Hanukkah (Jewish)

In approximately 164 B.C., Maccabees, a small group of Jews fighting for religious freedom won victory over the Syrians. The legend goes that to rededicate the Temple, they found only one jar of holy oil and miraculously the candelabra remained lit for 8 days. Also called the Festival of Lights, Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days.

12.16 – Posadas (Mexico)

A nine-day traditional celebration throughout Mexico. Processions of pilgrims go door to door asking for posada, which means shelter, commemorating the search by Mary and Joseph for shelter.

12.18 – 1st Muharram / Islamic New Year (Islam)

The first of Muharram marks the first day of the first month (Muharram) of the Islamic year. Celebrations begin the previous day at sundown.

12.21 – Tohji-Tasai (Shinto)

The sun is of central importance in Japan and this day celebrates the end of the Yin period of the Sun in its declining strength and the growing power of the Yang period.

12.21 – Yule (Wicca)

During the winter solstice – the longest night of the year, the rebirth of the sun, which is life sustaining, is celebrated.

12.25 – Christmas Day (Christian)

This day celebrates Jesus Christ's birth over 2000 years ago. Customs include lighting candles, exchanging gifts and using evergreen decorations to celebrate this day. In most communities it is a family day.

12.26 – Kwanzaa (African American/Canadian)

A professor who wanted to encourage blacks to celebrate their heritage started Kwanzaa's in California in 1966. Kwanzaa means first fruit in Swahili and is a harvest festival. Families exchange gifts and have African-style feasts. Seven-pronged candleholders are lit on each consecutive night for the seven principles: unity, self-determination, working together, sharing, purpose, creativity, and faith. The celebration continues until January 1.

12.27 – Ashura (Islam)

The tenth day of the first Islamic month (Muharram). For Shi'ite Muslims, this day mourns the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad. Devout Shi'a commemorate this day of sadness with the retelling of the story of the battle fought in Kerbala.

12.31 – Omisoka (Japan)

To usher in the New Year, families clean their homes and eat toshi-koshi buckwheat noodles. Buddhist temples around the country begin ringing out the old year, sounding the temple bell 108 times.