

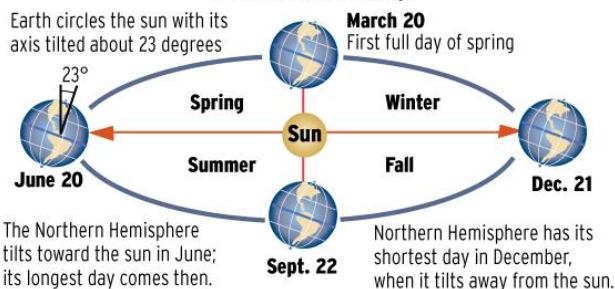
ZARATHUSHTI FESTIVALS

All Zarathushti festivals are celebration of the laws of nature ASHA. It shows their level of scientific knowledge and its importance among the ancient Zarathushtis.

The four key positions of the sun are celebrated starting with the Vernal Equinox as **NOW ROOZ** the Summer Solstice as **TIRGAN** the Autumnal Equinox as **MEHREGAN** and the Winter Solstice as **YALDA** the birth of the Sun.

Seasons change with the sun

Equinox occurs each spring and fall when noon sun is overhead at the equator. Day and night are each about 12 hours long.



Sources: The Old Farmer's Almanac, McClatchy-Tribune

The Register

In addition there are 6 Seasonal Festivals called **GAHANBAR**. Two of which relate to the seasons of the ancient Arctic homeland and 4 pertain to the seasons of their later temperate homeland. **SADEH** is also a festival from the Arctic past.

NOW ROOZ (MARCH 20-21) (1st Farvardin)

Now Rooz the Persian New Year is the celebration of the Vernal Equinox and the Rejuvenation in nature. It has crossed all religious and national boundaries and is celebrated by all the people that once formed the great Persian Empire. The word Now Rooz is made up of two Persian words, **Now** meaning **New** and **Rooz** meaning **Day**. According to Persian mythology, King Jamshid celebrated the first spring after the great ice age, which is believed to have happened some twelve thousand year ago. Ever since then it has been part of the Persian culture and they have shared it with all whom they came in contact with. As for

The Celebration of Asha

the coining of the word **Now Rooz**, meaning New Day it goes back to 1725 BCE, and was coined by Zarathushtra the great sage of ancient Iran who had also given the world its first scientific Meridian which he named **Nim Rooz** meaning Mid-Day. When the sun is at mid-day position on 63 degree longitude the whole hemisphere from Japan and Australia to Europe and Africa has sunlight. Zarathushtra also calculated that in the year 1725 BCE the vernal equinox and sunrise would coincide at Balkh where he lived thereby **the New Year and the New Day would start at the same time**. To record this rare phenomenon he named that particular New Year, Now Rooz - the New Day. **Thus, NOW ROOZ is where and when the sunrise coincides with the vernal equinox.** As recorded in history, in 487 BCE once again Now Rooz was celebrated, this time at Persepolis where the First Rays of the rising sun lighted the especially erected stone tower at exactly the same moment as the vernal equinox.

CELEBRATION: The highlight of the Now Rooz celebration is the arranging of the Now Rooz Table which consists of seven items. The ancient Persians who were all followers of Zarathushtra decorated their table with Seven Trays (HAFT SEENIE) filled with numerous symbolic items. The Seven Trays represented the SEVEN ETERNAL LAWS OF ZARATHUSHTRA as derived from the "Gathas", the songs of Zarathushtra. (See previous page) It was a way of renewing their bond and reminding themselves of the path they need to follow in life. The celebrations lasted 19 days till when the name of the month and day coincided.

TIRGAN (JUNE 20-21) (1st Tir)

Tirgan is the celebration of the summer Solstice. It also is the longest day; people spend their day outdoors and being hot they spray water on each other and it has become the festival of water. It used to last for 13 days and end when the month of Tir coincided with the day of Tir. Having forgotten the origin it is celebrated on the last day when the month and the day are of the same name.

The laws of Nature

MEHREGAN (Sept 22 -23) (1st Mehr)

Mehregan is the celebration of the Autumnal Equinox. Just like Now Rooz the day and night is equal and it was also celebrated at the exact moment of the equinox. The celebrations lasted 16 days till when the name of the month and the day coincided.

YALDA or DEYGAN (Dec 21-22) (1st Dey)

It is the celebration of the winter Solstice. It is also the longest night and considered the Birth of the Sun because from the next day the day grows longer. In Mithraism it is celebrated as the birthday of the sun god Mithra.

GAHANBARS

Gahanbars are seasonal festivals explicitly celebrating an important farming related occurrence in each season. With respect for tradition but at the same time believing in progress they preserved the two seasonal festivals of their ancestral homeland in the Arctic and at the same time added the four season of their new temperate homeland.

Arctic Gahanbars: Maidhyo-Shahem Gahanbars (the Mid-Summer Gahanbars). (June 29 to July 3) (8 to 12 Tir). **Ayeh-Threm** (the Coming of Winter). This was to celebrate the sowing of the winter crops which were generally root crops. (Oct 12 to 16) (20 to 24 Mehr)

Temperate Gahanbars:

Maidhyo-Zarem (Mid Spring): when fresh vegetables are in plenty. (10 to 14 Ardibesht – 30 April to 4 May)

PaitiShahem (End of Summer): gathering of fruits. (Sept.12 to 16) (21 to 25 Shahrivar).

Maidh-Yarem (Middle of perfect rest): when farmers, shepherds and their animals are resting. (Dec 31 to Jan 4) (10 to 14 Dey). **Hamas-Path-Maedem** (Equality of heat and cold, day and night): preparation for the revival of Nature. (March 16 to 20) (25 to 29 Espand).

SADEH (January30/ Bahman 10) is the 100th day of winter in the Arctic region & is a festival that has continued from the ancient Arctic homeland. (1of Aban+10 of Bahman=30+30+30+10=100)(Oct 9+30+31+Jan30=100)