

## LETTER FROM OUR READERS

**We received this email from Mr. Parviz Varjavand in March but it was late for our Nou Rouz issue. We invite our learned readers to send in your thesis on the issue raised in this letter with regards to the determination of a year as the starting point of our calendar.**

### First Historic Nou Rouz, 1725 BCE

The festival of Nowrooz is approaching and most persons of Persian cultural heritage will celebrate this ancient festival at the vernal equinox. Most Iranians will celebrate it as Khorshidi year 1382, yet they all know that the age of Nowrooz goes much further back in history than this date. Persian legends trace back Nowrooz to king Jamshid, a prehistoric king with many magical attributes. Legends are valuable in their own right, yet it would be interesting to know when for the first time Nowrooz has been recorded in a historical and documented manner.

A great Persian astronomer and master of the art of calendar was the late Mr. Zabih Behrooz (1890-1971). His two books about the art of calendar making in Persia are uncontested classics in this field. Based on studying some ancient Persian calendars found in Tourfan, China, that were printed in the Journal of Royal Asiatic Society-October 1945, Behrooz was able to calculate that the year Zero for devising these calendars was the spring equinox of the year 1725 BCE. This benchmark he realized to be of enormous significance. Using this year as a starting point, a great amount of astronomical data reaching us from ancient times and making no sense, would fall in place and compliment one another with great harmony. Some Zoroastrian texts pointed to a special Nowrooz that Zoroaster as an astronomer was supposed to have calculated when he was 42 years old. Behrooz made an assumption that this historic Nowrooz of 1725 BCE could only be that special Nowrooz inculcated by Zoroaster. Iranian and Zoroastrian scholars examining Behrooz's work concluded that he had a valid point and other dates related to Zarathushtra based on this benchmark year were assumed. The Zoroastrians of Iran accepted the dates 1767 BCE as the year of birth, 1738 BCE as the year of assenting to be a prophet, and 1690 BCE as the year of passing away of Zarathushtra. We must remember that other than 1725 BCE which has historic bases, these other dates

pertaining to the life of Zarathushtra are assumptions and secondary dates. This Nowrooz of 2003 CE, Iranian Zoroastrians will be celebrating their Nowrooz of 3741 ZRE (Zoroastrian Religious Era) because they decided to start their calendar from 1738 BCE, the date they consider Zarathushtra to have been chosen as a prophet by Ahura Mazda. Nowrooz is a cultural and national festival and as such it will be robbed of its strength if a particular religion monopolizes it as only their own. All Persons of Persian heritage love and celebrate Nowrooz while all of them are not Zoroastrians. Besides, it is the year 1725 BCE that is of historic significance and not 1738 BCE. The years calculated from the benchmark of 1725 BCE were referred to as "Nowroozi Shahriyari" years. Here "Shahriyari" stands in contrast to "Dini", as "Civil" contrasts with "Religious". If we want to adopt a non religious beginning for Nowrooz, the year 1725 BCE is the only befitting and logical choice. In conclusion, we can trace the earliest Nowrooz to a historic date of 1725 BCE. Since the years calculated from this benchmark are called "Nowroozi Shahriyari," this spring equinox of 2003 CE is the Nowrooz 3728 NS (Nowroozi Shahriyari). This system of dating is non-religious and all persons of Persian heritage can celebrate it with comfort and joy. MAY WE ALL HAVE A VERY HAPPY NOWROOZ 3728 NS.

Mehr Afzoon,  
Parviz Varjavand

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