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FESTIVALS VI, VII, VIII

vi. BAHAI

The major Bahai festivals and holy days have been fixed by the founders and central figures of the Bahai faith (q.v.). Of the list below, the first five (totaling seven holy days) were established by Bahāʾ-Allāh (q.v.) in *al-Ketāb al-aqdas* (par. 110-111; see AQDAS), and the last two were authorized by ʿAbd-al-Bahāʾ (q.v.). On these nine holy days, Bahais are to suspend all work. The Bahai calendar is based on the solar year. However, for the time being, all of the festivals and holy days listed below, except the first two and the sixth, are celebrated in the Middle East on their anniversaries according to the Muslim lunar calendar. In the rest of the world, all celebrations are in accordance with the solar year. It is expected that the Universal House of Justice (see BAYT AL-ʿADL), the supreme authority in the Bahai world, will eventually standardize this. Although there are no formal rituals associated with these holy days, Bahais often recite the Tablet of Visitation (*Zīārat-nāma*) for the Bāb (q.v.) and Bahāʾ-Allāh on the anniversaries of their birth and death.

Reżwān (*ʿīd-e Reżwān*, 21 April-2 May). The most important Baha'i festival is the twelve-day period known as the festival of Reżwān, called by Bahāʾ-Allāh

"the King of Festivals" and one of two "Most Great Festivals" (*al-Ketāb al-aqdas*, par. 112, 110). It commemorates the twelve days that Bahāʾ-Allāh spent in the Najībīya Garden outside the walls of the city of Baghdad, immediately before leaving the city in 1863. During these days, Bahāʾ-Allāh is reported to have disclosed to a few close followers the true nature of his claim. This marks the beginning of the prophetic dispensation of Bahāʾ-Allāh, for it was during these days that "He shed upon the whole of creation, the splendors of His name, the All-Merciful" (*Montaḵabāt*, p. 30; tr., p. 27). The first, ninth, and twelfth days of this twelve-day period are considered holy days on which work should be suspended—the observance of the first day should be at about three hours after noon. These are the days of Bahāʾ-Allāh's arrival, his family's arrival, and Bahāʾ-Allāh's departure from the Najībīya Garden, respectively. Certain Bahai administrative functions take place during these days. Local spiritual assemblies (*maḥāfel-e rūḥānī-e maḥallī*) are elected on the first day of this festival. National spiritual assemblies (*maḥāfel-e roḥānī-ye mellī*) are elected some time during the twelve-day period at a national convention, except every fifth year when the international convention is held to elect the Universal House of Justice.

Nowrūz (*ʿĪd-e Nowrūz*). The new year in the Bahai calendar begins on the vernal equinox, the ancient Persian festival of Nowrūz. The first day of the new year is a festival and holy day. At present the Bahais in the Middle East celebrate this day as determined astronomically, while in the rest of the Bahai world it is always celebrated on 21 March. The Universal House of Justice will eventually determine the point in the world which will be used to fix the day of Nowrūz.

The Declaration of the Bāb (*Baʿṯat-e Ḥażrat-e Aʿlā*, 23 May). The Bāb himself fixed the day and time—two hours and eleven minutes after sunset—for the commemoration of the first announcement of his claims to his first disciple Mollā Ḥosayn Bošrūʾī (q.v.). Bahāʾ-Allāh confirmed its importance as one of two "Most Great Festivals" (see above).

The Birth of the Bāb (*Tawallod-e Ḥażrat-e Aʿlā*, 20 October). This festival commemorates the birth of the Bāb in Shiraz in 1819.

The Birth of Bahāʾ-Allāh (*Tawallod-e Ḥażrat-e Bahāʾ-Allāh*, 12 November). This commemorates the birth of Bahāʾ-Allāh in Tehran in 1817. This and the birth of the Bāb occur on the first and second days of Moḥarram when observed according to the Muslim calendar. Bahāʾ-Allāh refers to them as the "Twin

Birthdays" and says that they "are accounted as one in the sight of God" (*al-Ketāb al-aqdas*, tr. p. 105).

The Ascension of Bahāʾ-Allāh (*Ṣoʿūd-e Ḥażrat-e Bahāʾ-Allāh*, 29 May). Commemorates the death of Bahāʾ-Allāh in the mansion of Bahjī, near Acre (ʿAkkā) in Palestine in 1892. It is observed by Bahais at three hours after midnight.

Martyrdom of the Bāb (*Šahādat-e Ḥażrat-e Aʿlā*, 9 July). Commemorates the execution of the Bāb by firing-squad in Tabriz in 1850. It is observed by Bahais at noon.

There are two other festivals, but these are not holy days on which work should be suspended. They are the Ascension of ʿAbd-al-Bahāʾ (*Ṣoʿūd-e Ḥażrat-e ʿAbd-al-Bahāʾ*, 28 November), commemorating the death of ʿAbd-al-Bahāʿ in 1921; and the Day of the Covenant (*Rūz-e āhd wa mīṯāq*, 26 November), which commemorates the establishment of ʿAbd-al-Bahā's position as the successor to Bahāʾ-Allāh.

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vii. JEWISH

Most Jewish festivals are associated with nature and agriculture. The Jews of Persia celebrate all the usual festivals observed by the Jews worldwide. In addition, Persian Jews celebrate Persian national festivals, such as Nowrūz. The differences in the way these festivals are celebrated by Persian Jews are minimal; it is likely that there were some such differences in the past, but they have not yet been properly studied. The differences noted in this article are mostly taken from a book written by the teacher and educator Ḥanīna Mīzraḥī, who was born in Tehran in 1886, emigrated to Palestine in 1895, and died in Jerusalem in 1974. These differences in custom seem to have survived to the middle of the present century. As a result of improvements in global communication, Jewish emigration to Israel from 1948 onward, and the exodus of three-quarters of the 80,000 Persian Jews to Europe and the United States in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Persia, these differences have become blurred, and nowadays Persian Jews celebrate the major and minor festivals in the same way as their co-religionists throughout the world. A brief description of the festivals observed by Persian Jews is given below, with additional details in the bibliography at the end of the article.

Rosh ha-Shanah, which usually falls in September, is not mentioned in the Pentateuch, but in Leviticus 23:23-35 the first day of the seventh month (Tishrei) is singled out as a special day that occurs after the harvest. It is clear that this is the agricultural New Year, since the Pentateuch explicitly states that the month of Nisan is actually the beginning of the year (Exodus 12:2). Rosh ha-Shanah is observed on the first and second days of Tishrei, on which days no work is done. It is the custom to gather near a river, the sea, a well, or some other stretch of water in order to perform the rite *tashlikh*, casting away sins, in accordance with Micah 7:19. There is no mention of the custom of *tashlikh* in the Talmud. Persian Jews dress up in white to assemble in the synagogue for the holiday prayers. They bless each other with the words “May you reach a hundred good years” (*ṣad sāl be-sālhā-ye k̲ūb berasīd*). They also gather in private homes in order to pray for the illumination of the souls of the dead. On the eve of the holiday, it is customary to eat an apple dipped in honey, beet, dates, black-eyed beans, pomegranates, squash, fish, and a dish made from sheep’s head and trotters, called in Persian *kalla pāča*. Because of the potential threat posed by the non-Jewish population, Persian Jews did not perform *tashlikh* outdoors,by a river or the sea. They used to carry out the rite

at home, next to the well in the courtyard, or by the well in the synagogue courtyard.

Yom ha-Kippurim, the Day of Atonement, falls on the tenth day of the month Tishrei (September/October), and marks the reconciliation of man with God. The ten days from the first to the tenth of Tishrei are called the "Ten Days of Penitence," and Yom ha-Kippurim is thus the most important Jewish festival. On this day, God forgives all one's sins, though wrongs between human beings themselves cannot be forgiven until the sinner appeases and recompenses the person sinned against (Mishnah Yoma 8:9). The Pentateuch has very little to say about this day (Leviticus 16:29-34). Some hours before the beginning of Yom ha-Kippurim, Persian Jews used to slaughter a chicken as atonement for their sins. The head of the family first swung the chicken around his head, and then around the heads of all the members of his family, and said three times: "This is my substitute, this is my replacement, this is my atonement." Two chickens were slaughtered for a pregnant woman, since the sex of the child was not yet known. The feathers were kept and used to stuff cushions; the wings and legs were given to the poor, and the remnants used to prepare a meal for the eve of Yom ha-Kippurim. The custom of using chicken as atonement probably came from the Jewish community of Babylon. Some medieval authorities, such as Joseph Caro, the Ramban (Nachmanides) and the Rashba condemned the custom. After this, the fast began, lasting for about 25 hours. At the close of Yom ha-Kippurim, people used to bless each other with the words: "*taʿnīt wa tešūvā-ye šomā qabūl.*" ("May your fasting and your repentance be accepted.")

Sukkot ("booths" or "tabernacles") falls on the 15th Tishrei and continues for seven days (September/October); it is primarily associated with the harvest. Work is prohibited on the first day in the Land of Israel, and on the first two days in the Diaspora. The Pentateuch gives no details of the customs associated with this festival (Leviticus 23:33-35, 42,43). As described in Deuteronomy (16:13-14), this festival was meant to be a joyous occasion for everyone. Feasting and carousing filled the Israelites' houses, and even the Temple. Apparently the celebrations and wine-drinking during this festival were carried to such lengths that they incurred the wrath of the prophets. The prophets Isaiah and Amos seem to refer to the revels in the Temple on Sukkot. The prophet Isaiah complains: "But they have also erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink" (Isaiah 28:7). These are the words of Amos: "I hate, I

despise feast days, and I will not smell the sacrifices of your solemn assemblies Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not bear the melody of thy viols" (Amos 5:21-23).

The day after Sukkot, i.e., the eighth day (the ninth day in the Diaspora), is Shemini ʿAtzeret "the eighth day of solemn assembly." This day is also called Simḥat Torah, "Rejoicing over the Law," since the cycle of reading the Pentateuch in the synagogue is completed on this day. Afterwards, all the Scrolls of the Torah are taken out and the worshippers dance and sing with them in the streets. The Jews of Persia did not observe the customs associated with this festival very strictly—sitting in the *sukka* or booth, waving the four species (except for the *etrog*), which consist of the *etrog* (citron), *hadasim* (myrtle twigs), *lulav* (palm branch) and *ʿaravot* (willow twigs); nor did they dance and rejoice with the Torah Scrolls in the streets, thus avoiding possible tension with their non-Jewish neighbors.

Ḥanukkah ("dedication," an abbreviation of the phrase *ḥanukkat ha-mizbeaḥ* "dedication of the altar," as described in 1 Maccabees 4:45) is not mentioned in the Bible; it is celebrated for eight days, starting 25th Kislev (December/January). Tradition connects the festival to Hasmonaean Judah the Maccabee, and to the Jews' victory over the Greeks in the second century B.C.E. The Maccabees subsequently entered the Temple and purified it (2 Maccabees 1:8; 10:1-5). The custom of kindling lights is not mentioned in these sources, but it is recorded in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* (12:325) and in the *Scroll of Antiochus*. The rabbinic sages ordained that the lights should be placed near a window or in some easily visible place. However, this was not always feasible: the Talmud tractate *Shabbat* 45a records the fear felt by the Jews when lighting the Hanukkah lights because of potential Zoroastrian animosity.

In this century, with the spread of the Zionist movement in Persia under the generally tolerant policy of the Pahlavis towards religious minorities, the festival became more popular among Persian Jews. That they were conscious of Ḥanukkah in earlier times is proved by the discovery of a *tafsīr* poem on the *Scroll of Antiochus*, known in Judeo-Persian as the *Ḥanukā-nāma*, by ʿEmrānī(q.v.; 15th-16th centuries) and a second poem called *Antīyoḵus-nāma* by Yūsof ben Esḥāq ben Mūsā (composed in 1688). No details of Ḥanukkah celebrations are known, however. According to Mīzraḥī (pp. 56-59), the poor among the Jews used to go out with a brazier full of glowing charcoal to the houses of the rich; there they would throw *esfand* (q.v.; wild rue) on the embers, blessing their rich neighbors and receiving in return gifts and

donations of money. The children sang popular songs in the local dialect, asking that the evil eye stay away from their benefactors.

Ṭu bi-Shevaṭ (lit., “the fifteenth of Shevat,”) is usually considered a minor festival and marks the New Year of the Trees. It falls in January/February and is clearly linked to agriculture, coming after the early winter rains. Ashkenazi Jews used to celebrate it by eating fifteen different kinds of fresh and dried fruit, but the festival was more important to the Sephardim, who wrote songs and liturgical poems in its honor (Pearl, pp. 23-33).

Purim (from the word *pur*, interpreted in the Book of Esther (q.v.; 9:26) as meaning “lot”; this is also the meaning of the Akkadian word *pūrū* (Tadmor; Aḥiṭuv). The festival celebrates the rescue of the Jews of Persia at the time of king Ahaseurus from Haman, who had cast lots (*pur*) to determine the date on which Jews would be killed (Esther 3:7). The festival is observed on the 14 Adar (February/March), and the Jews of Shushan celebrated it on the 15th Adar (9:18), which was called Shushan Purim. In the talmudic period, out of respect for Jerusalem, it was decreed that the Shushan Purim should be observed in those cities in the Land of Israel that have been walled since the time of Joshua. Thus today, according to Jewish law, the festival is observed on the 15th of Adar in Jerusalem, which has been walled since Joshua’s days, but need not be celebrated in Tel Aviv, which is unwalled. In an intercalary year, in which there are two months of Adar, Purim is observed in the second Adar.

There is controversy over the historicity of the events narrated in the Book of Esther. Some scholars see an Iranian influence in this festival (Hartum); others would cast doubt on the identification of Ahaseurus with Xerxes (Shalit). Biblical critics have noted a similarity between the names Mordecai and Esther and the Babylonian gods Marduk and Ishtar. There is no mention of Purim in Jewish sources predating the first century B.C.E. (see also Aḥiṭuv and Tadmor).

According to the Talmud (*Berakhot* 54a), communities that have escaped from destruction, persecution, and slaughter must establish a festival day like Purim, known as “Little Purim.” Tradition records that the Jews of Shiraz used to observe a special Purim in addition the regular one on 2nd Heshvan (October/November) to commemorate the beginning of their being permitted to return to Judaism from forced conversion to Islam. The date of this event is disputed, and opinions vary from the 13th to the 19th centuries. Since the festival originated in Persia, it was particularly popular among Persian Jews,

and the festivities were doubled when it fell close to the Persian New Year. New clothes were donned and sweets distributed among children, and the Book of Esther was read in the original and in a *tafsīr* version. The *Ardašīr-nāma* (q.v.) by the Judeo-Persian poet Šāhīn (14th century C.E.) was also read. The Jews of Hamadān used to celebrate the festival by gathering round the tombs of Esther and Mordecai, sometimes all night long. A large number of Jews would come to Hamadān from other cities to spend Purim near the tombs.

Passover, one of the most important festivals, begins on the 15th Nisan and lasts seven days in the Land of Israel and eight days in the Diaspora. Work is prohibited on the first and last days in the Land of Israel, and on the first two and last two days in the Diaspora; it is permitted on the intermediate days. The origin of the festival is recorded in the book of Exodus. Sometimes called *Pesaḥ* ("Passover"), it is also known as *ḥag ha-matzot* "the feast of unleavened bread,"(Exodus 12:1-28, 43-49; 34:25; Leviticus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:1-8, 16). Passover is celebrated by Jews all over the world with Seder ("order"), according to the book known as the Haggadah, which embodies the commandment to remember the Exodus from Egypt. The book includes the recitation of prayers, blessings, and stories and the eating of special foods according to a prescribed order. Each food is intended to remind the participants of the events of the Exodus and the passage from slavery to freedom. Not all the regulations of the Seder come from the Bible; some originate in the Talmud. Since Passover usually falls in the Spring, at the same time as the Persian month of Farvardīn, Persian Jews used to combine the joy of Passover and the Nowrūz festival with festive meals and excursions, though they were careful to eat *matzot* and avoid food forbidden during Passover (*ḥametz*). They used to celebrate the Sīzda-be-darfestival the day after the end of Passover, in the same way as their Persian compatriots. Sīzda-be-dar is celebrated by all Persians on the 13th Farvardīn, usually by spending the day outdoors, and enjoying the beauties of nature. The Kurdish Jews of Persia and Iraq, who called this day *Ṣaḥrāna*, used to observe a similar custom. The Jews of Morocco called it *Memūna*.

Shavuʿot (lit., "weeks"), "Pentecost" in Greek, signifying the 50th day after the first day of Passover, falls on the 6th Sivan (May/June); its Biblical source is Deuteronomy 16:10 and Exodus 34:22. This festival is also linked to agriculture, marking the beginning of the wheat harvest (Leviticus 23:15, 23;16; Exodus 34:22). In later times, the festival was linked to the Giving of the

Law on Mount Sinai, though there is no evidence of an explicit connection in the Bible itself. The first reference to this link is in the Book of Jubilees (I, 6:17-22), a pesudepigraphic work dating from the middle of the Second Temple period (about the middle of the second century B.C.E.). Josephus does not mention this connection. Very few customs are associated with this festival. The Book of Ruth is read, thus emphasizing the agricultural nature of the holiday. Persian Jews call this festival *moʿed-e gol* ("the festival of flowers"), and used to make merry and eat dairy foods, besides reading the relevant chapters of the Bible, the prayers and blessings in the festival prayer book, and also the *tafsīr* in verse called *Azharot,* a poetic version of the 613 positive and negative commandments. The translation into Judeo-Persian verse was made by Benyāmīn ben Mīšāʿel (Amīnā), and a rather different version was composed by Simantov Melammed (Netzer, *Manuscripts*, index).

Minor Fasts and Festivals. For the fasts and festivals of Lag be-ʿOmer, Tishʿah be-Av, ʿAsarah be-Ṭevet, Shevaʿ-ʿesrai be Tammuz, Taʿanīt Ester and Tzom Gedaliah, see the bibliography below. It should be noted that some communities regarded all these festivals as important, especially Tishʿah be-Av, and observed them with care.

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(AMNON NETZER)

viii. ARMENIAN

Nearly all the festivals of the Armenians of Persia are connected to the Armenian church, which gives its sanction to them. Festivals from pre-Christian times, often with elements related to pre-Islamic Iranian beliefs, were absorbed and transformed into Christian festivals. Many of the ceremonies of daily life such as baptism, marriage and funerals, due to their semi-public components, can also be considered in the same category as festivals. Even secular holidays include a strong clerical presence.

Teaṙnondaṙaǰ, the festivity of the presentation of the Lord (baby Jesus) to the Temple, is originally based on a fire festival. On its eve, 13 February, after a religious service, the newly-married young men of that year would assemble around wood in the church courtyard which they would set on fire after paying money and gifts. The fire symbolized the heavenly groom who has married the church. Each villager then set his own candle on fire with this sacred fire to quickly set ablaze a woodpile at his own house (Raffi, pp. 168-176; Rāʿīn, p. 57; Russell, pp. 499-502). In the villages of Pʿēria and other regions, the young men jumped three times over the fire. The ashes were thought to bring fertility to animals, and good luck (Eremean, pp. 115-16; Boettiger, p. 57).

The pagan feast of *Vardavarʿ*, connected with the cult of the goddess Anahit (see AHĀHĪD), was transformed into the Feast of the Transfiguration (*Aylakerputʿiwn*). Fourteen Sundays after Easter, in mid-summer, it commemorates Christ’s appearance with a shining countenance to three disciples. After a priest sets doves flying, he sprinkles the people with blessed water, and then the people sprinkle and throw water on each other. They adorn each other with roses; in some places games are played afterwards (Ormanean, tr., pp. 33-34; Eremean, p. 121; Boettiger, pp. 56-57; Russell, pp. 251-52, 378).

On the Feast of the Assumption (*Verapʿoxum*) of the Holy Virgin Mary, in mid-

August, the first grapes of the summer are blessed by a priest, thus allowing grape eating to begin for the summer (Boettiger, pp. 67-68; Kushakean, tr., pp. 43-44; Eremean, p. 122).

On the eve of the springtime Ascension Day of Christ (*Hambardzum*), young girls and brides go to pick flowers and sing, dance, and eat. Upon returning to their village, they place small personal objects in a pot already containing either sand or water, depending on the locale, from which the next day a little girl choses. Either an older woman tells their fortune, or the lines of a song sung when their tokens are chosen are understood as prophesy (Eremean, pp. 119-21; Boettiger, pp. 62-66; Russell, pp. 375-86).

Christmas commemorations were generally more elaborate in the past. Travelers in particular were impressed by the ceremonies and processions in the Safavid period. At times the shah himself would participate with court members in New Julfa on 6 January, the day Armenians celebrated the birth and baptism of Christ (Della Valle, III, pp. 100-13; Struys, II, pp. 325-26). Visits back and forth between Armenian families would then take place as long as for the next forty days (Freericks, p. 44; Eremean, p. 115; Yovhannisean, p. 33). Even on Christmas Eve, in certain villages, remnants of various ceremonies connected with fire such as the welcoming of a new large log for the family hearth for good luck continued to be practiced (Shahbaz, p. 136).

Easter, commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, aside from church services, includes visits to the homes of families and friends. Painting of eggs, egg-cracking contests, and dancing takes place (Eremean, p. 119; Rāʿīn, p. 58; Tēr-Petrosean, 31 March 1994; Yovhannisean, p. 33; Höltzer, p. 64). During *Bun Barekendan* or Shrovetide (preceding the pre-Easter fast of Lent), the poor are given gifts of money, music is played in the streets, and, at in some areas, a crowd dressed in costume, e.g., as Kurdish or Iranian feudal lords, went from house to house collecting food and gifts. Jesters amused the villagers. Afterwards, the crowd went to eat and drink outside of the village (Raffi, pp. 250-253; Hacʿuni, pp. 400-402).

Armenians traditionally made pilgrimages to regional churches on Sundays and particularly on the commemorative day of the saints the churches were named after. These were occasions to both worship and picnic in the church orchard (e.g., on Tabriz, Yovhannisean, pp. 24-26). The most famous contemporary pilgrimage in Persia was formally instituted in 1954 to Surb Tʿadēos (Saint Thaddeus) the Apostle Monastery in western Azarbaijan.

Hundreds and even thousands of Armenians participate in three July days of praying, lighting candles, eating, and dancing (Pōłosean, pp. 578-79; H. Ačēmean; Papean; “S. Tʿadēi vankʿi uxtaworneri veradarjə”; Hariwrawor hawatacʿealner □”).

St. Vardan’s Day in February commemorates the martyrdom for Christianity of an Armenian general and his followers at the battle of Avarayr in 451 C.E. by Persian forces pressing for a return to Zoroastrianism. It is celebrated today throughout Persia as an important part of Armenian identity, with evening religious services, songs, and recitations by schoolchildren, and speeches by adults (Tēr-Petrosean, 8 February, 1994; “Vardanancʿ pʿaṙatōni handisutʿiwn”; “Ceṙnarkner Urmiayum”; Boettiger, pp. 61-62). Traditionally, however, some parts of Persia such as Pʿēria did not commemorate it (Eremean, p. 117).

Weddings traditionally lasted as long as seven days and seven nights, with an elaborate sequence of feasts held in the homes of the parents of the bride and groom, as well as church services. Not only was there eating, drinking, dancing, and henna painting of hands, but formidable processions, often on horseback, through the streets at night with music, candles, and even at times fireworks, took place. In various parts of Persia, different symbolic ceremonies were included. In New Julfa, for example, red and green silk ribbons were tied on the groom’s chest. Less affluent families scaled down the marriage festivities, and by mid-twentieth century they generally only lasted a few days (Raffi, pp. 219-22; Fryer, pp. 277-82; Petrosean, pp. 125-47; Abgareancʿ, pp. 194-205; Eremean, pp. 106-10; Tavernier, pp. 192-94; Höltzer, pp. 66-70).

Baptisms on Christmas day were given a particularly dramatic form, with priests plunging infants three times into a river from special boats with crosses and banners. The Persian shahs would attend such occasions at Isfahan, and afterwards participate in a grand repast (Tavernier, pp. 187-91; Boettiger, pp. 79-80).

Funerals include dramatic crying and wailing in addition to church services and the burial. Prayers are chanted during the carrying of the corpse to the cemetery. Special meals are held for family and friends, who often stay in the home of the bereaved for several days. Forty days after the death, a requiem service is offered, ending the official mourning period (Richards, pp. 86-87; Petrosean, pp. 152-55; Tavernier, pp. 195-97; Tēr-Petrosean, 8 February 1994). The day after Easter is the most prominent of five yearly *mereloc*ʿ or days of the dead. In addition to church services, at the cemetery, priests chant prayers

over the graves of loved ones, and then families proceed to picnic (Petrosean, p. 158; Boettiger, pp. 58-61).

Among the more secular holidays, the New Year's Eve festival is the most important. Gifts are exchanged and special foods prepared and eaten at festive family tables. In recent times, "Father Winter" or "Father New Year" carries out the gift-giving role of the Western Santa Claus. On New Year's day, many Armenians go to church for services (Boettiger, pp. 68-69; Eremean, p. 114; Tʿłʿagicʿ, pp. 5-6). The commemoration of the 1915-18 genocide perpetrated against the Armenians by the Ottoman Empire takes place every 24 April. Armenians gather locally throughout Persia and protest in church ceremonies, speeches, and large processions, which, political conditions permitting, are usually done publicly ("Armenians in Iran . . ." ; *Alikʿ*, 25 April 1994, p. 1, 26 April 1994, p. 4, 28 April 1994, p. 2). Armenians have participated in Persian state festivals and festivities under the various governmental regimes (Garegin [Sarkisean]; Pōłosean, pp. 571-73; Tʿehranahaytutʿean škʿeł tōnakataruťiwnə□"; "'Dahē faǰr'μ i tōnakataruťiwn̦"; "'Dahē faǰr' i aṙitʿov gitakaṇ"; "'Dahē faǰr'μ in nwirwac□"). Finally, regular athletic festivals play a big role in the Armenian social calendar ("Iran's Khatami attends□") .

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