

# Naw Ruz

## Naw-Rúz

Naw-Rúz, meaning “new day,” in Farsi, is the Bahá’í new year. It coincides with the spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere and can therefore fall on **March 19<sup>th</sup>**. Zoroastrian and Persian New Years are also celebrated on the first day of spring and each is celebrated in its own unique way. Some spell the holiday as Nawruz or Nooruz.

The Bahá’í month leading up to Naw-Rúz is a period of daytime fasting, used as a time of introspection and prayer (the Bahá’í calendar consists of 19, 19-day months). This period offers both a physical and spiritual preparation for spring and renewal. For Bahá’ís, Naw-Rúz is a celebratory Holy Day marking the end of the fasting period and symbolizing the start of a new year in the Bahá’í calendar. Bahá’í days begin at sunset, so the Holy Day begins the evening prior.

Work is suspended and, as is typical of most Bahá’í holy days, there are no fixed rituals or practices associated with the holiday. Because the Bahá’í community is worldwide, the Bahá’í Faith intentionally does not impose cultural traditions upon others. Rather, Bahá’í encourages practices that emerge organically among local communities. In general, the New Year is celebrated with prayers, feasting, and joyful celebrations. These celebrations may look different depending on location.

The Persian New Year marks the return of spring and is associated with new beginnings. It also falls at the spring equinox and has been fixed on **March 20<sup>th</sup>** for those celebrating outside Iran. Traditions include cleaning the home, purchasing new clothing and furniture, and lighting bonfires. For Zoroastrians, Nowruz symbolizes renewal, rejuvenation, and a new beginning. Many will celebrate the holiday with parades, communal prayer, gatherings, and tree planting. Both Persians and Zoroastrians celebrating may also have a “haft seen” table, which holds seven items starting with S that symbolize hopes for the new year. In addition, various Central Asian communities observe a version of this New Year holiday.

## The Bahá’í Faith

The Bahá’í Faith is an independent world religion that traces its origins back to 19th century Persia, now Iran. Bahá’ís are followers of Bahá’u’lláh—meaning the “Glory of God”—whom they understand to be the most recent in a series of divine messengers sent by God to give the spiritual and moral teachings by which humanity can advance. These messengers, known as “Manifestations of God,” included Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad. Bahá’u’lláh taught that the religions of the world come from the same source and are essentially successive chapters of one evolving religion.

Bahá’ís believe the crucial need facing humanity is to find a unifying vision of the future of society and of the nature and purpose of life—a vision which they find in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh. Central

to the Bahá'í Faith is the conviction that every person is part of one human family, and Bahá'ís around the world work to build the moral and social conditions necessary for all people to contribute their share to an ever-advancing civilization. These efforts are guided by the Universal House of Justice, the world governing body of the Bahá'í Faith.

The Bahá'í Faith is one of the world's major religions, with more than five million Bahá'ís spread across virtually every country. The Bahá'í Faith is one of the most widespread religions in terms of geographical reach. In Iran the community is the largest non-Muslim religious minority. The two most sacred places for the Bahá'ís are the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, and the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Acre, Israel.

### **The Zoroastrian Faith**

The Zoroastrian Faith is a religion dating back to at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE Persia, now Iran. Zoroastrians worship the God, Ahura Mazda, literally 'wise lord' who is believed to have created the universe and maintain the order of the cosmos. Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic and dualistic religion, meaning that Zoroastrians believe primarily in one God who is the embodiment of good, which exists in opposition to Angra Mainyu, the spirit or embodiment of evil.

The truth of Ahura Mazda is thought to have been revealed to Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra), a prophet born in Persia sometime during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. In Zoroaster's teachings and the beliefs of Zoroastrianism, humans must choose to live a life of good or evil, and such actions will determine their destination in the afterlife. Zoroastrians thus see the worship of Ahura Mazda and doing good deeds as paramount to their spiritual practice.

Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest religions, with between 110,000 and 120,000 adherents worldwide, the majority of whom live in India and Iran. During Naw Ruz, Zoroastrians visit fire temples and partake in other rituals to honor the Persian new year and the creation of the element of fire.

### **How Will Naw Ruz Affect the Global Workplace?**

The celebration of Naw Ruz will vary based on the location and the traditions of the local Bahá'í community. However, Naw Ruz is generally celebrated with meetings for prayer and celebration, feasting, music, and dancing. Time may also be spent visiting friends and relatives and exchanging gifts. Employees who celebrate Naw Ruz may request space or time to perform these activities during the holiday. Additionally, since Naw Ruz is one of the nine Bahá'í holidays in which work is suspended, Bahá'í employees may take this day off work. In the 19 days preceding Naw Ruz, many Baha'is will fast by abstaining from food, drink, and smoking from sunrise until sunset each day.

It is important to remember that Naw Ruz is also observed in different ways by Zoroastrians, many Persians around the globe, and others. As a result, employees belonging to different communities may ask for time off for this holiday.

## Greetings

If you would like to recognize the holiday with your colleagues and friends, it is appropriate to greet them with a simple “Happy Naw Ruz” or “Happy New Year.”

**For more useful information on world religions, subscribe to Tanenbaum’s online resource, [Religion at Work: A \(Human\) Resource](#). Visit the Tanenbaum [Workplace Resources](#) page for additional Tanenbaum fact sheets and contact Tanenbaum at [membership@tanenbaum.org](mailto:membership@tanenbaum.org).**