

Religious Holidays December 2009

Masa'il

<i>Religion</i>	Baha'i
<i>When</i>	December 12, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	The 15 th month.

Sharaf

<i>Religion</i>	Baha'i
<i>When</i>	December 31, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	The 16 th month.

Christmas

<i>Religion</i>	Christianity
<i>When</i>	Dec. 25, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	<p>Christmas or Christmas Day is an annual Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus, along with themes such as family, goodwill, giving and compassion. It incorporates Christian religious ceremonies with the traditions of ancient winter festivals such as Yule and Saturnalia.</p>
<i>Traditions/ Practices</i>	<p>Remembering or re-creating the Nativity is one of the central ways that Christians celebrate Christmas. Christmas pageants may include a retelling of the story of the birth of Christ. Groups may visit neighborhood homes to sing Christmas carols. Others do volunteer work or hold fund raising drives for charities.</p> <p>On Christmas Day or Christmas Eve, a special meal of Christmas dishes is usually served. Candy and treats are also part of Christmas celebration in many countries.</p> <p>Another tradition is for people to send Christmas cards to their friends and family members.</p>

First of Muharram

<i>Religion</i>	Islam
<i>When</i>	December 18, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	Islamic New Year, 1431. The first of Muharram marks the first day of the first month (Muharram) of the Islamic year. It begins at sundown the previous day.

Ashura

<i>Religion</i>	Islam
<i>When</i>	Dec. 27, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	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.

Chanukah

<i>Religion</i>	Judaism
<i>When</i>	Dec 12 through to Dec 29, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	Chanukah, meaning "dedication" in Hebrew refers to the joyous eight-day celebration during which Jews commemorate the victory of the Macabees over the armies of Syria in 165 B.C.E. and the subsequent liberation and "rededication" of the Temple in Jerusalem.
<i>Traditions/ Practices</i>	The modern home celebration of Chanukah centers around the lighting of the chanukiah, a special menorah for Chanukah; unique foods, latkes and jelly doughnuts; and special songs and games.

Tohji-taisai

<i>Religion</i>	Shinto
<i>When</i>	December 21, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	Grand Ceremony of the Winter Solstice. Celebrates the joy of the ending of the yin period of the sun, when it declines in strength, and the beginning of its growing power or yang period. The sun is of central importance in Japan, expressing the presence of Amaterasu Omikami, the Kami of the Sun.

Yule

<i>Religion</i>	Wicca
<i>When</i>	December 21, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	Yule, which marks the New Year in the Anglo-Saxon and northern traditions of Wicca, is the celebration of the birth of the God as the winter-born King, symbolized by the rebirth of the life-generating and life-sustaining sun. It is a time for ritually shedding the impurities of the past year, and for contemplating avenues of spiritual development in the year ahead.

Death Anniversary of Zarathustra

<i>Religion</i>	Zoroastrianism
<i>When</i>	December 26, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	The anniversary of the death of Zarathustra (Zoroaster), the founder of the Zoroastrian faith.
<i>History</i>	His dates are uncertain: the Greeks dated him at ca. 6000 BCE. Modern scholarship suggests he lived in the second millennium BCE. Some of his hymns, known as Gathas, are preserved in the Zoroastrian scriptures.

Gahambar Maidyarem

<i>Religion</i>	Zoroastrianism
<i>When</i>	Dec. 31, 2009
<i>Importance</i>	This day celebrates the creation of animals. It is also a time for the equitable sharing of food.

Kwanzaa

<i>Religion</i>	Non-religious African American holiday
<i>When</i>	Dec. 31 , 2009 - Jan. 4, 2010
<i>Importance</i>	An African American holiday which celebrates family, community, and culture. The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in Swahili. The kinara is the center of the Kwanzaa setting and represents the original stalk from which we came: our ancestry.
<i>Traditions/Practices</i>	The candles of a seven-branched candelabrum representing attributes such as unity, self-determination, responsibility,

cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith, are successively lit over the seven days of the festival.