

Cultural Calendar - Liveryman Zoë Chowney

17th – 22nd July – Hajj (Islam):



Hajj is the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, which every adult Muslim (who are physically and financially able) must make at least once in his or her lifetime. The hajj is the fifth of the fundamental Muslim practices and institutions known as the Five Pillars of Islam.

When the pilgrim is about 6 miles from Mecca, he or she enters the state of holiness and purity known as ihram and dons the ihram garments; for men they consist of two white seamless sheets that are wrapped around the body, while women may wear sewn clothes.

They enter Mecca and walk seven times around the sacred shrine called the Kaaba, in the Great Mosque, kiss or touch the Black Stone (al-Ḥajar al-Aswad) in the Kaaba, pray twice in the direction of the Maqām Ibrāhīm and the Kaaba, and run seven times between the minor prominences of Mount Ṣafā and Mount Marwah.

18th July – Tish'a B'Av (Judaism):



Tish'a B'Av is a solemn occasion because it commemorates a series of tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people over the years, many of which have coincidentally happened on this day.

These include the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem in 586 BCE by Nebuchadnezzar when 100,000 Jews were believed to have perished, and the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 CE. World War I and the beginning of the Holocaust are also associated with this day.

19th July – Day of 'Arafah (Islam):



The Day of 'Arafah is an Islamic holiday that falls on the 9th day of Dhu al-Hijjah of the lunar Islamic Calendar. It is the holiest day in the Islamic calendar, the second day of the Hajj pilgrimage, and the day after is the first day of the major Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha (see below).

At dawn of this day, Muslim pilgrims will make their way from Mina to a nearby hillside and plain called Mount Arafah and the Plain of Arafah. It was from this site that Muhammad gave one of his last famous

sermons in the final year of his life. Some Muslims hold that part of the Quranic verse announcing that the religion of Islam had been perfected was revealed on this day.

20th – 23rd July – Eid al-Adha (Islam):



There are two key Eid's (Celebration Festivals) in Islam: Eid-ul-Fitr, which signifies the completion of the Holy Month of Ramadan; and Eid-ul-Adha, the greater Eid, which follows the completion of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, at the time of Qurbani (sacrifice).

Although Eid-ul-Adha has no direct relation to the Hajj Pilgrimage, it is but a day after the completion of Hajj and therefore has significance in time.

24th July – Asalha Puja / Dharma Day (Buddhist):



Asalha Puja is one of Theravada Buddhism's most important festivals, celebrating as it does the Buddha's first sermon in which he set out to his five former associates the doctrine that had come to him following his enlightenment.

This first pivotal sermon, often referred to as "setting into motion the wheel of dhamma," is the teaching which is encapsulated for Buddhists in the four noble truths: there is suffering (dukkha); suffering is caused by craving (tanha); there is a state (nibbana) beyond suffering and craving; and finally, the way to nirvana is via the eightfold path.

All the various schools and traditions of Buddhism revolve around the central doctrine of the four noble truths.

24th July – Tu B'Av (Judaism):



Tu B'Av, or the 15th of Av, is a minor Jewish holiday. In modern-day Israel, it is celebrated as a holiday of love. It has been said to be an auspicious day for weddings.

The Talmud tells us that many years ago the "daughters of Jerusalem would go dance in the vineyards" on the 15th of Av, and "whoever did not have a wife would go there" to find himself a bride.

24th July – Guru Purnima (Hindu):



Guru Purnima is a tradition dedicated to all the spiritual and academic Gurus, who are evolved or enlightened humans, ready to share their wisdom with very little or no monetary expectation, based on Karma Yoga. It is celebrated as a festival in India, Nepal and Bhutan by the Hindus, Jains and Buddhists and is for them to revere their chosen spiritual teachers / leaders and express their gratitude.

25th July – St James the Great Day (Christian):



St James, also called James, son of Zebedee, or James the Greater, (born, Galilee, Palestine, died 44 CE, Jerusalem), is one of the Twelve Apostles, distinguished as being in Jesus' innermost circle and the only apostle whose martyrdom is recorded in the New Testament. James is described as one of the first disciples to join Jesus and was one of only three apostles whom Jesus selected to bear witness to his Transfiguration.

28th July – Eid al-Ghadeer (Islam):



Eid al-Ghadeer is a Shia feast, and is considered to be among the "significant" feasts of Shia Islam. The Eid is held on 18 Dhu Al-Hijjah at the time when the Islamic prophet Muhammad was said to have appointed Ali ibn Abi Talib as his successor.