

Iranian Association of Rochester New York
Proudly Presents

Mehregan: Festival of Autumn



What is Mehregan?

Mehregān ([Persian](#): مهرگان or **Jašn-e Mehr** جشن مهر [Mithra Festival](#)) is a [Zoroastrian](#) and [Persian](#) festival celebrated to honor the [yazata Mithra](#) ([Persian](#): Mehr), which is responsible for friendship, affection, and love. It is also widely referred to as the **Persian Festival of Autumn**.

"Mehregan" was originally a feast honoring the Persian god [Mithra](#). By the [4th century BCE](#), it was observed as one of the name-day feasts, a form it retains in today. Still it is one of the two pre-Islamic festivals that continue to be celebrated by the public at large: Mehrgān, dedicated to Mithra (modern *Mehr*), and [Tirgan](#), dedicated to [Tishtrya](#) (modern *Tir*).

What is being celebrated at Mehregan?

Name-day feasts are festivals celebrated on the day of the year when the day-name and month-name dedicated to a particular angle or virtue intersect. The Mehr day in the Mehr month

corresponded to the day farmers harvested their crops. They thus also celebrated the fact God had given them food to survive the coming cold months.



When Mehregan is celebrated?

Irrespective of which calendar is observed, Mehrgān falls on the 196th day of the calendar year. For calendars that have March 21 as [Nowruz](#) or New Year's Day (i.e. in the *Fasili* and *Bastani* variants of the [Zoroastrian calendar](#) as well as in the [Iranian civil calendar](#)), Mehrgān falls on October 2. For the *Shahanshahi* variant of the Zoroastrian calendar, which in 2006–2007 has New Year's Day on August 20, Mehrgān fell on March 3 of the following Gregorian year. For the *Kadmi* variant, which has New Year's Day 30 days earlier, Mehrgān falls on February 1.

Mehregan in Shaahnaameh

Biruni mentions a local anecdotal association for his description of Mehrgan with a fragment of a tale from Iranian folklore: On this day, [Fereydun](#) vanquished the evil [Zahhak](#) and confined him to [Mount Damavand](#). This fragment of the legend is part of a greater cycle that ties Mehrgan with Nowruz; Dahak vanquished [Jamshid](#) (who the legends have as the one establishing Nowruz or New Year's Day), and Fereydun vanquishes Dahak, so restoring the balance. The association of Mehrgan with the polarity of spring/autumn, sowing/harvest and the birth/rebirth cycle did not escape Biruni either, for as he noted, "they consider Mihragān as a sign of resurrection and the end of the world, because at Mihragān that which grows reaches perfection.