

The Assyrian New Year – Why 6772

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On this day Assyrians around the world will begin to celebrate the Year 6772, known commonly as the Assyrian New Year, Akitu, or Neesanu Festival. In ancient times, this celebration, which took part at the start of spring, was a symbol of revival and a major theme in ancient Assyrian religion. Assyrians viewed the start of spring as the “start of a new life.”

Despite its ancient roots, some have continued to challenge the celebration, claiming that 6772 is far too old to be reliable.

As people initiated settlements and civilizations, they needed to start creating calendars and the start of New Years for religious, agricultural and other reasons. Earlier civilizations used many different types of calendars, including solar, lunar and solilunar (lunisolar) calendars. Then emerged the concept of setting up the new year and we know that the earliest records of the New Year Festival emerged in Mesopotamia. The New Year was declared with the appearance of the new moon after the vernal equinox. Here Spring and farming began and the new year was set with the concept of revival, rebirth through the start of the new moon. The appearance of the new moon varied from March 20 into April sometimes.

Today, humanity is fortunate that modern technologies allow archaeologists to estimate to a very reasonable proximity the period of excavated human remains, buildings, tools, etc. For example, what makes a specific civilization three thousands years old is that archaeologists have discovered enough evidence from human remains, their places of residence, places of worship, the tools they used, etc. at a certain location known to be the undisputed home of those people and the studies of those archaeological remains pinned those people’s presence to three thousand years ago.

We know from such archaeological discoveries that Eridu, with its mounds of Abu-Shahreïn or Nowawis, which are about 130 miles from the line of coast in southern Iraq date back as far as 6500 BC.¹ We also know that at least by 5000 BC city states flourished in Babylonia (southern Iraq) and by 4500 BC expansion and conflict between those city-states were taking place.² Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that people lived in Babylonia for at least 6500 year, if not longer.

The Assyrians have inhabited Assyria (northern Iraq) from time immemorial. Unlike fictitious or fabricated stories by other people occupying today that region, archaeological evidence has linked Assyrians to northern Iraq for over 7000 years – an undeniable fact according to historians.

HWF Saggs relied on such archaeological evidence to prove this fact. He states that first steps towards agriculture around Aqra and also at a location 30 miles from Mosul plain has been dated by radio-carbon analysis to around 9000 BC. He states that we can follow the development process of controlling food supplies from sites on the outer fringes of Assyria at Jarmo (a permanent village of 20 or so houses, with a population of about 150 people), north-east of Arrapha (Kirkuk), there was a settlement of 3 to 4 acres occupied from about 7000 onwards. Saggs continues to stress that the earliest type of settlement in the Assyrian plains is named from the site of Umm Dabaghiyeh, 15 miles west of Hatra. Settlements are found also north towards Jebel Sinjar. Early farming culture on the Assyrian

¹ Sayce, A. H. *Babylonians and Assyrians: Life and Customs*. New York, 1899.

² Goodspeed, George Stephen, *A History of the Babylonians and Assyrians*. New York, 1912.

plains is found at Tell Sotto dated 6000, discovered by the Russian excavators. Around that same period of 6000 we find farming settlements at Hassuna 22 miles south of Mosul.³ Lastly, but not least, we know of the presence of a stone object bearing the name of Sargon, King of Sippara, 3800 BC⁴, which adds up to 5800 years from today.

These examples show reasonable proof that people settled Assyria at least 7000 years ago and that such people are the early ancestors of modern Assyrians. Though there is no documentation of the new year celebration in those early days, the existence of early Assyrian settlements is clear. Therefore, it is very reasonable to consider that such people celebrated the “start of a new life” in one form or another. Official records of the Persian New Year (birth of new life) known as Nowruz did not appear until the 2nd century, but most historians believe its celebration dates back at least as far as the 6th century BC.⁵ If historians believe that the Persians celebrated the new year 6th Century BC, that would make the event more than 7000 years old.



In ancient Egypt, the temple was considered the point at which the god came into existence at creation. In ancient Israel, temples were center of worship and national identity. In Mesopotamia, a temple was not only the house of the local deity or the patron god of the city, it was the seat of both religious and secular authority. Life centered around temples – they meant everything for the early settlements and/or cities. Settlements of early Assyrians led to the establishment of temples that could have taken after Ashur, the deity, and that does not necessarily refer to the ancient city of Ashur, modern Qal’aat Sharqat. Today’s Assyrians built new churches as new communities are established and expanded and they name them after holy men even if churches with such names already existed. Meaning, a temple of Ashur could have been erected earlier than that in the ancient capital city of Ashur, albeit they could have not necessarily been that grand. The first temple of Ashur could have been erected anywhere around those early Assyrian settlements.

The birth date of Jesus, one could reason, is uncertain. If this is so, should billions of Christians reject or abandon December 25? The date of December 25 was set at a later time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and people accepted it. Setting approximate or new dates for early events does not take

³ Saggs, H.W.F., *The Might That Was Assyria*. London, 1984.

⁴ Budge, E. A. Wallis, *Babylonian Life and History*. USA, 1884.

⁵ <https://www.history.com/news/5-ancient-new-years-celebrations>

away from the essence and importance of an event. The practice has many precedences. Consider setting January 1 as the new year. In 1968, educated Assyrians and members of the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) designated April 1, 1968 as the Assyrian New Year 6718, the official national day for Assyrians. The year was set based on the establishment of the foundation for the first temple of god Ashur, which is agreed to have been created in 4750 BC and considering many archaeological facts, few of which I listed earlier.

Although the Assyrian new year was officially declared a National Day of Importance in 1968, Assyrians commemorated the arrival of spring in one form or another much earlier and for centuries.

For a people like the Assyrians, the new year celebration represents not only their historical past, but their deep-seated desire to “start a new life” in the form of a national revival steeped in ancient history.