



HARVEST FESTIVALS WORLDWIDE



Mooncakes



Mehregān Table



Apple Bobbing



The 'Four Species'

Autumn marks the end of the **harvest**¹ season in the majority of temperate countries – hence its association with a number of religious rituals to celebrate the end of the season of plenty and exorcise the fear of the **barrenness**² and food scarcity of winter.

In China and Vietnam the celebration of this **threshold**³ between plenty and want is called Mid-Autumn festival, and it is held on the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar with full moon at night – corresponding to late September or early October of the Gregorian calendar. Moon **worship**⁴ plays an important role in this festival, as the ancient Chinese believed in rejuvenation being associated with the moon and water. In addition, in Chinese culture a round shape symbolizes completeness and reunion - accordingly, the sharing and eating of round mooncakes (the most traditional food served during this festival) among family members symbolizes the completeness and unity of families.

Mehregān is one of the two earliest known Iranian festivals, and it celebrates 'mehr', that is, kindness, knowledge, friendship, love and light. The festival falls on the 196th day of the Iranian year (10th Mehr. 2nd Oct.), right during the harvest time – which accounts for the plentiful meal served on this occasion. The sides of the **tablecloth**⁵ are decorated with wild **marjoram**⁶, while a copy of Khordeh Avesta (a Zoroastrian religious text), and a **vessel**⁷ full of **antimony**⁸ are placed on the table together with rosewater, sweets, flowers, vegetables and fruits – namely, pomegranates and apples, almonds and pistachios. A few silver **coins**⁹ and lotus seeds are placed in a dish of water scented with marjoram extract.

Apples also star in the Halloween celebrations since the Roman times, that is, the time when the apple was first imported to the British Islands. Being also among the most widespread fruit grown in the American colonies, apple bobbing (a game consisting in 'fishing' apples with one's teeth out of a basin filled with water) has become even more popular and traditional in America than it originally was in the United Kingdom.

Celebrated on the 15th day of the seventh month of the Hebrew year, Tishrei (varying from late September to late October), also the Jewish celebration of sukkot originally was a harvest festival – hence the tabernacles providing the 'setting' for it. During this celebration – which lasts 7 to 8 days – it is mandatory to wave **branches**¹⁰ or fruits of four sacred plants mentioned in the Torah, that is, the etrog (a citrus fruit), the date palm, the **myrtle**¹¹ and the **willow**¹².



Vocabulary

Please, Find below a Visual Glossary of the Difficult Words in the Text. Based on the Context and Pictures Provided, Match Each Definition with Its Corresponding Word.



1. Harvest



2. Barrenness



3. Threshold



4. Worship



5. Tablecloth



6. Marjoram



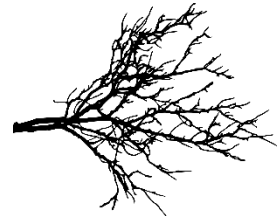
7. Vessel



8. Antimony



9. Coins



10. Branches



11. Myrtle



12. Willow

- ___ **A.** An aromatic southern European plant of the mint family.
- ___ **B.** Parts of a tree growing out from the trunk or from a bough.
- ___ **C.** A tree of temperate climates which typically grows near water.
- ___ **D.** The process or period of gathering in crops.
- ___ **E.** A cloth spread over a table, especially during meals.
- ___ **F.** A hollow container, especially one used to hold liquid, such as a bowl or cask.
- ___ **G.** A strip of wood or stone at the bottom of a doorway.
- ___ **H.** A plant with aromatic foliage and white flowers followed that turn into berries.
- ___ **I.** The feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity.
- ___ **J.** A brittle silvery-white semimetal.
- ___ **K.** Flat discs or pieces of metal with an official stamp, used as money.
- ___ **L.** The state of being unable to produce offspring or to bear fruits.