

Living Life!

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Everyone loves Nawroz!

When I think of Nawroz I think of legends of tyrants, bonfires made from burning tires, picnics, dancing, new party clothes, and the Kurdish flag.



“Nawroz” means “first day” and refers to the first day of spring, which is also the first day of the Kurdish year. It is the first day of the ancient Kurdish calendar.

So, what is the legend of Nawroz? Of course you know it – or maybe you’ve heard a slightly different version of the one I re-tell here.

On March 21, in the year 612, Kawa the blacksmith killed the tyrant named “Zahak” and brought freedom to the Kurds and many other Middle Eastern people. This is the story that my friend Haval told me several years ago.

**Happy
Nawroz!**



The Legend of Nawroz

as told by Haval

It is said that a long time ago there was a tyrant, a ruler whose name was Zahak. Zahak had two heads, one of which was a snake.

One day he got sick. All sorts of doctors visited him to try to diagnose his illness. This was their prescription: “You must drink the blood of two teenagers every day as your medicine.” After that, Zahak killed a lot of teenagers in order to drink their blood.

During this time there was a blacksmith named Kawa. Zahak wanted to kill Kawa’s son so that he could drink his blood. But of course Kawa didn’t want him to do that! Neither did anyone else want their son or daughter to die. So, Kawa got all the people together and told them, “I’m going to kill Zahak.” None of the people believed him because Zahak was very strong. But Kawa replied, “No, I’m going to kill him tonight. And when I have done so, I’m going to light a bonfire to let you know.”

Kawa did indeed kill Zahak that evening. When he stood before Zahak, he said, “Here’s my son. You ordered me to bring him to you so that you could drink his blood.” Then when Kawa went up close to Zahak, he drew a sword and cut off his head! He also killed a lot of Zahak’s guards.

Then Kawa went to the roof of Zahak’s palace. He took off his yellow shirt and raised it high, like a flag for Kurdistan. Then he lit a bonfire on the top of a mountain and soon everyone nearby saw it and knew that Zahak was dead. They were so happy! The people in the next village also lit a bonfire on the top of their mountain, as did the people of the next village. That’s how they got the word out all over Kurdistan that Zahak was dead.

Since that time Kurds have celebrated their independence on Nawroz (March 21) by lighting bonfires. The fire is a symbol of their freedom from the tyrant.