

Individual Laws: Bahá'í Festivals

Bahá'u'lláh



Bahá'í Festival

All Feasts have attained their consummation in the two Most Great Festivals, and in the two other Festivals that fall on the twin days—the first of the Most Great Festivals being those days whereon the All-Merciful shed upon the whole of creation the effulgent glory of His most excellent Names and His most exalted Attributes, and the second being that day on which We raised up the One Who announced unto mankind the glad tidings of this Name, through which the dead have been resurrected and all who are in the heavens and on earth have been gathered together. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Ordainer, the Omniscient.

Happy the one who entereth upon the first day of the month of Bahá, the day which God hath consecrated to this Great Name. And blessed be he who evidenceth on this day the bounties that God hath bestowed upon him; he, verily, is of those who show forth thanks to God through actions betokening the Lord's munificence which hath encompassed all the worlds. Say: This day, verily, is the crown of all the months and the source thereof, the day on which the breath of life is wafted over all created things. Great is the blessedness of him who greeteth it with radiance and joy. We testify that he is, in truth, among those who are blissful.

Say: The Most Great Festival is, indeed, the King of Festivals. Call ye to mind, O people, the bounty which God hath conferred upon you. Ye were sunk in slumber, and lo! He aroused you by the reviving breezes of His Revelation, and made known unto you His manifest and undeviating Path.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh, para. 110 - 112)

O Pen of the Most High! Say: O people of the world! We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period, and at its close have designated for you Naw-Rúz as a feast. Thus hath the Daystar of Utterance shone forth above the horizon of the Book as decreed by Him Who is the Lord of the beginning and the end. Let the days in excess of the months be placed before the month of fasting. We have ordained that these, amid all nights and days, shall be the manifestations of the letter Há, and thus they have not been bounded by the limits of the year and its months. It behooveth the people of Bahá, throughout these days, to provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy, and with joy and exultation to hail and glorify their



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Lord, to sing His praise and magnify His Name; and when they end—these days of giving that precede the season of restraint—let them enter upon the Fast.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh, para. 16)

The number of months in a year, appointed in the Book of God, is nineteen.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh, para. 127)

Question: *Concerning the Most Great Festival.*

Answer: The Most Great Festival commenceth late in the afternoon of the thirteenth day of the second month of the year according to the Bayán. On the first, ninth and twelfth days of this Festival, work is forbidden.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh, Questions & Answers, NO. 1)

Question: *Concerning the Festival of the Twin Birthdays.*

Answer: The Birth of the Abhá Beauty was at the hour of dawn on the second day of the month of Muharram, the first day of which marketh the Birth of His Herald. These two days are accounted as one in the sight of God.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh, Questions & Answers, NO. 2)

Question: *Concerning Naw-Rúz.*

Answer: The Festival of Naw-Rúz falleth on the day that the sun entereth the sign of Aries, even should this occur no more than one minute before sunset.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh, Questions & Answers, NO. 35)

“and at its close have designated for you Naw-Rúz as a feast”

The Báb introduced a new calendar, known now as the Badí' or Bahá'í calendar (see notes and). According to this calendar, a day is the period from sunset to sunset. In the Bayán, the Báb ordained the month of 'Alá' to be the month of fasting, decreed that the day of Naw-Rúz should mark the termination of that period, and designated Naw-Rúz as the Day of God. Bahá'u'lláh confirms the Badí' calendar wherein Naw-Rúz is designated as a feast.

Naw-Rúz is the first day of the new year. It coincides with the spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere, which usually occurs on 21 March. Bahá'u'lláh explains that this feast day is to be celebrated on whatever day the sun passes into the constellation of Aries (i.e. the vernal equinox), even should this occur one minute before sunset (Q&A). Hence Naw-Rúz could fall on 20, 21, or 22 March, depending on the time of the equinox.

Bahá'u'lláh has left the details of many laws to be filled in by the Universal House of Justice. Among these are a number of matters affecting the Bahá'í calendar. The Guardian has stated that the implementation, worldwide, of the law concerning the timing of Naw-Rúz will require the choice of a particular spot on earth which will serve as the standard for the fixing of the time of the spring equinox. He also indicated that the choice of this spot has been left to the decision of the Universal House of Justice.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Notes No. 26)

“Let the days in excess of the months be placed before the month of fasting.”

The Badí' calendar is based on the solar year of 365 days, 5 hours, and 50 odd minutes. The year consists of 19 months of 19 days each (i.e. 361 days), with the addition of four extra days (five in a leap year). The Báb did not specifically define the place for the intercalary days in the new calendar. The Kitáb-i-Aqdas resolves this question by assigning the “excess” days a fixed position in the calendar immediately preceding the month of 'Alá', the period of fasting. For further details see the section on the Bahá'í calendar in *The Bahá'í World*, volume XVIII.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Notes No. 27)

“ first day of Riḍván”

This is a reference to the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh and His companions in the Najíbíyyih Garden outside the city of Baghdád, subsequently referred to by the Bahá'ís as the Garden of Riḍván. This event, which took place thirty-one days after Naw-Rúz, in April 1863, signaled the commencement of the period during which Bahá'u'lláh declared His Mission to His companions. In a Tablet, He refers to His Declaration as “the Day of supreme felicity” and He describes the Garden of Riḍván as “the Spot from which He shed upon the whole of creation the splendors of His Name, the All-Merciful.” Bahá'u'lláh spent twelve days in this Garden prior to departing for Istanbul, the place to which He had been banished.

The Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh is celebrated annually by the twelve-day Riḍván Festival, described by Shoghi Effendi as “the holiest and most significant of all Bahá'í festivals” (see notes and).

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Notes No. 107)

“All Feasts have attained their consummation in the two Most Great Festivals, and in the two other Festivals that fall on the twin days”

This passage establishes four great festivals of the Bahá'í year. The two designated by Bahá'u'lláh as “the two Most Great Festivals” are, first, the Festival of Riḍván, which commemorates Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration of His Prophetic Mission in the Garden of

Riḍván in Baghdád during twelve days in April/May 1863 and is referred to by Him as “the King of Festivals” and, second, the Báb’s Declaration, which occurred in May 1844 in Shíráz. The first, ninth and twelfth days of the Festival of Riḍván are Holy Days (Q&A), as is the day of the Declaration of the Báb.

The “two other Festivals” are the anniversaries of the births of Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb. In the Muslim lunar calendar these fall on consecutive days, the birth of Bahá’u’lláh on the second day of the month of Muharram 1233 A.H. (12 November 1817), and the birth of the Báb on the first day of the same month 1235 A.H. (20 October 1819), respectively. They are thus referred to as the “Twin Birthdays” and Bahá’u’lláh states that these two days are accounted as one in the sight of God (Q&A). He states that, should they fall within the month of fasting, the command to fast shall not apply on those days (Q&A). Given that the Bahá’í calendar (see notes and) is a solar calendar, it remains for the Universal House of Justice to determine whether the Twin Holy Birthdays are to be celebrated on a solar or lunar basis.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Notes No. 138)

“The Most Great Festival is, indeed, the King of Festivals”

A reference to the Riḍván Festival.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Notes No. 140)

“The number of months in a year, appointed in the Book of God, is nineteen.”

The Bahá’í year, in accordance with the Badí’ calendar, consists of nineteen months of nineteen days each, with the addition of certain intercalary days (four in an ordinary year and five in a leap year) between the eighteenth and nineteenth months in order to adjust the calendar to the solar year. The Báb named the months after certain attributes of God. The Bahá’í New Year, Naw-Rúz, is astronomically fixed, coinciding with the March equinox (see note). For further details, including the names of the days of the week and the months, see the section on the Bahá’í calendar in The Bahá’í World, volume XVIII.

(The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Notes No. 147)