

XXV. HOLY DAYS

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English



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1. Two Holy Days When Work is Not Prohibited — The Significance of the Day of the Covenant Explained

"In response to your letter of 2 December 1984 asking a question about the event commemorated on the Day of the Covenant, the Universal House of Justice has directed us to send you the following extract from a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian on this subject:

'The Day of the Covenant Nov. 26th and the Day of the Ascension Nov. 28th, anniversaries of the birth and the Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá must be observed by the friends coming together, but work is not prohibited. In other words the friends must regard observance of these two anniversaries as obligatory — but suspension of work not to be regarded as obligatory.'

'The explanation of how 26 November came to be substituted, in relation to the Birthday of Abdu'l-Bahá, for 23 May is related by the late Hand of the Cause Hasan M. Balyuzi in his book, 'Abdu'l-Bahá', on page 523:

'Abdu'l-Bahá told the Bahá'ís that this day was not, under any circumstances, to be celebrated as His day of birth. It was the day of the Declaration of the Bab, exclusively associated with Him. But as the Bahá'ís begged for a day to be celebrated as His, He gave them November 26th, to be observed as the day of the appointment of the Centre of the Covenant...'

"The House of Justice hopes that this will assist your understanding of the significance of this important date in the Bahá'í calendar."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Administrative Committee for South Zaire, January 23, 1984)

1. Suspension of Bahá'í Administrative Activities on Bahá'í Holy Days

"Concerning your question about holding meetings of consultation on Bahá'í Holy Days, we have been requested to share with you an excerpt from the translation of a Persian letter from the beloved Guardian dated 3 January 1929 to an individual believer:

'On the Bahá'í festivals and solemn commemorations it is preferable for Assemblies, Committees and Bahá'í Institutions to suspend their activities. However, final decision in these matters rests with the Universal House of Justice.'



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"The Universal House of Justice feels that the above directive of the Guardian is adequate for the time being. It should be clear, however, that should emergencies occur which require the holding of meetings of Bahá'í institutions on the nine Holy Days of the Faith, this would be permissible."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, July 21, 1982) [pg 301]

1. Bahá'í Radio Should Refrain from Work on Nine Holy Days — Volunteers May Present Special Programs

"The Universal House of Justice has considered your inquiry of 18 April concerning Bahá'í Holy Days and the operation of the Radio Bahá'í facility in Labranza, and we have been asked to convey its reply."

"As you are well aware, not only should Bahá'ís refrain from work on the nine Holy Days, but the shops and establishments owned by Bahá'ís should also be closed on these Days. If government regulations do not require the station to be on the air on a mandatory daily basis, Radio Bahá'í should not engage in regular broadcasts on the nine Holy Days. However, to aid the Bahá'í Community in its observance of any one of these Days, the station may offer at a particular time a special program suited to such observance. Those wishing to be involved in the production and airing of the program would be rendering a special service."

"You have no doubt noted that since the Bahá'í day begins at sunset and ends at the following sunset, no Gregorian day would be fully taken up by the observance of any one of the nine Bahá'í Holy Days; thus there is time to broadcast regular programs every day of the Gregorian year. The station naturally will inform its listeners of the meaning of each Holy Day well in advance so that they can appreciate the reason for the station's silence on such a Day."

"The House of Justice feels that this confirmation of the religious character of the station would be a means of teaching, a source of encouragement to the believers and model for their emulation."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Chile, July 6, 1986)

1. Business Places Owned by Bahá'ís Must Close During the Nine Holy Days — In the Bahá'í Temple Minimal Essential Services May Be Provided

"The beloved Guardian made it absolutely clear that the command to cease work during the nine Holy Days is a matter for conscientious obedience by every individual believer. In the case of businesses and other undertakings entirely under Bahá'í control they must also close down during the Bahá'í Holy Days, even though non-Bahá'ís may be members of their staffs."

"It is fully appreciated that the Bahá'í Temple must be open for worship on the Holy Days and therefore it is permitted to provide, to the minimum extent possible, essential services. Those necessary tasks, such as cleaning and other preparation of the building, which can be carried out on the previous day should be so done and only those duties which must be performed

should be undertaken on the Holy Day. In the case of the Temple it is immaterial whether the workers are Bahá'ís or non-Bahá'ís since it is the duty of the Faith to observe, especially in respect of its own institutions, the command to cease work on the Holy Days."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, August 12, 1977)

1. Exceptions Can Be Made When Contract Demands Service

"Regarding the sale of tea and other refreshments in a cinema under non-Bahá'í ownership: Those friends who have hired from the owner of the cinema a stall for the sale of such refreshments should make every effort to obtain permission to close on Bahá'í holidays. In case, however, the non-Bahá'í owner or partner refuses to grant their request their only alternative is to obey." [pg 302]

"The case is different with a bread bakery owned by a believer. In this case there can be no excuse whatever why the shop should not be closed during Bahá'í holidays, as there are always non-Bahá'í bakers from whom the public can buy."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 28, 1937)

1. Gift Giving is Not an Integral Part of Any of the Bahá'í Holy Days — nor is There a Prohibition

"The exchanging of presents among believers or the giving of gifts to children is not an integral part of any of our nine Bahá'í Holy Days. There is no prohibition against it, and it is, as you say, a custom among Persian believers such as the Bahá'í to whom you spoke, to exchange gifts at Naw-Ruz."

"The desire of you and your husband to associate the time of gift giving with your children's involvement in the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is praiseworthy and it is felt that the following extract from a letter written by the secretary of the beloved Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand on December 26, 1941 will be of value to you: 'The intercalary days are specifically set aside for hospitality, the giving of gifts, etc. Bahá'u'lláh Himself specified that they be used this way, but gave no explanation for it.'"

"In 'The Bahá'í World', Vol. XV, p. 691 we read: 'Bahá'u'lláh designated those days as the 'Ayyam-i-Ha' and ordained that they should immediately precede the month of Ala, which is the month of fasting. He enjoined upon His followers to devote these days to feasting, rejoicing, and charity.'"

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 18, 1982)

1. Proper Time to Hold Meetings of Commemoration

"...Regarding your question of the proper time to celebrate or hold our meetings of commemoration: The time should be fixed by counting after sunset; the Master passed away one hour after midnight, which falls a certain number of hours after sunset; so His passing

should be commemorated according to the sun and regardless of daylight saving time. The same applies to the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh Who passed away about 8 hours after sunset."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, August 12, 1944)

1. **Naw-Ruz**

"...This sacred day, when the sun illumines equally the whole earth, is called the equinox, and the equinox is the symbol of the Manifestation of God. The Sun of Truth rises on the horizon of Divine Mercy and sends forth its rays. This day is consecrated to commemorate it...."

(Talk by Abdu'l-Bahá, March 21, 1913: Star of the West, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 4)

1. **Naw-Ruz Has Nothing to Do with the Nineteen Day Feast**

"He would like to point out that if the believers gather before sundown on a certain date it does not matter if the meeting continues after sunset; it may still be considered as being held on the day they gathered. The Naw-Ruz Feast should be held on March 21 before sunset and has nothing to do with the 19-Day Feast. The 19-Day Feast [pg 303] is administrative in function whereas the Naw-Ruz is our New Year, a Feast of hospitality and rejoicing."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 5, 1950)

1. **Naw-Ruz Should Be Celebrated According to the Vernal Equinox**

"Regarding Naw-Ruz: If the vernal equinox falls on the 21st of March before sunset it is celebrated on that day. If at any time after sunset, Naw-Ruz will then, as stated by Bahá'u'lláh, fall on the 22nd. As to which spot should be regarded as the standard, this is a matter which the Universal House of Justice will have to decide...."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 15, 1940: Bahá'í News, No. 138, p. 1, September 1940)

1. **Naw-Ruz Cards**

"There is no objection to individual Bahá'ís sending Naw-Ruz cards if they want to; also the National Spiritual Assembly can send them out occasionally, but it should not become a fixed custom."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, March 14, 1947: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957, p. 65)

1. **Celebration of the Christian Holidays Among the Bahá'ís Should Be Discontinued**

"As regards the celebration of the Christian Holidays by the believers: It is surely preferable and even highly advisable that the friends should in their relation to each other discontinue

observing such holidays as Christmas and New Years, and to have their festal gatherings of this nature instead during the intercalary days and Naw-Ruz."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 19, 1938)

1. Holy Days Are Appropriate Occasions to Found Institutions and Projects for Social and Economic Development

"Briefly, every nation has a day known as a holiday which they celebrate with joy. In the sacred Laws of God, in every cycle and dispensation, there are blessed feasts, holidays and workless days. On such days all kinds of occupations, commerce, industry, agriculture etc., are not allowed. Every work is unlawful. All must enjoy a good time, gather together, hold general meetings, become as one assembly, so that the national oneness, unity and harmony may become personified in all eyes. As it is a blessed day it should not be neglected or without results by making it a day limited to the fruits of mere pleasure. During such blessed days institutions should be founded that may be of permanent benefit and value to the people so that in current conversation and in history it may become widely known that such a good work was inaugurated on such a feast day. Therefore, the intelligent must search and investigate reality to find out what important affair, what philanthropic institutions are most needed and what foundations should be laid for the community on that particular day, so that they may be established. For example, if they find that the community needs [pg 304] morality, then they may lay down the foundation of good morals on that day. If the community be in need of spreading sciences and widening the circle of knowledge, on that day they should proceed in that direction, that is to say, direct the thoughts of all the people to that philanthropic cause. If, however, the community is in need of widening the circle of commerce or industry or agriculture they should start the means so that the desired aim may be attained. If the community needs protection, proper support and care of orphans, they should act upon the welfare of the orphans, etc. Such undertakings that are beneficial to the poor, the weak and the helpless should be pursued in order that, on that day, through the unity of all and through great meetings, results may be obtained, the glory and blessings of that day may be declared and manifest...."

"In all the cycles of the prophets the philanthropic affairs were confined to their respective peoples only — with the exception of small matters, such as charity, which was permissible to extend to others. But in this wonderful dispensation, philanthropic affairs are for all humanity, without any exception, because it is the manifestation of the mercifulness of God. Therefore, every universal matter — that is, one that belongs to all the world of humanity — is divine; and every matter that is sectarian and special is not universal in character — that is, it is limited. Therefore, my hope is that the friends of God, every one of them, may become as the mercy of God to all mankind."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Star of the West, Vol. IX, No. 1, pp. 8-9, and cited in a compilation, prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development, entitled Social and Economic Development) [pg 305]

