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BAHÁ'Í CALENDAR, FESTIVALS AND DATES OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

1. FOREWORD

Excerpt from Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era by Dr. J. E. Esslemont

AMONG different peoples and at different times many different methods have been adopted for the measurement of time and fixing of dates, and several different calendars are still in daily use, e.g., the Gregorian in Western Europe, the Julian in many countries of Eastern Europe, the Hebrew among the Jews and the Muḥammadan in Muslim countries.

The Báb signaled the importance of the dispensation which He came to herald by inaugurating a new calendar. In this, as in the Gregorian Calendar, the lunar month is abandoned and the solar year is adopted.

The Bahá'í year consists of 19 months of 19 days each (i.e., 361 days), with the addition of certain 'intercalary days' (four in ordinary and five in leap years) between the eighteenth and nineteenth months in order to adjust the

calendar to the solar year. The Báb named the months after the attributes of God. The Bahá'í New Year, like the ancient Persian New Year, is astronomically fixed, commencing at the March equinox (21 March), and the Bahá'í era commences with the year of the Báb's declaration (i.e., 1844 A.D., 1260 A.H.).

In the not far distant future it will be necessary that all peoples in the world agree on a common calendar.

It seems, therefore, fitting that the new age of unity should have a new calendar free from the objections and associations which make each of the older calendars unacceptable to large sections of the world's population, and it is difficult to see how any other arrangement could exceed in simplicity and convenience that proposed by the Báb.

2. BAHÁ'Í FEASTS, ANNIVERSARIES AND DAYS OF FASTING

Feast of Ridván (Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh), 21 April–2 May 1863.

Feast of Naw-Rúz (New Year), 21 March.

Declaration of the Báb, 23 May 1844.

The Day of the Covenant, 26 November.

Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, 12 November 1817.

Birth of the Báb, 20 October 1819.

Birth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 23 May 1844.

Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, 29 May 1892.

Martyrdom of the Báb, 9 July 1850.

Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 28 November 1921.

Fasting season lasts 19 days beginning with the first day of the month of 'Alá', 2 March—the Feast of Naw-Rúz follows immediately after.

3. BAHÁ'Í HOLY DAYS ON WHICH WORK SHOULD BE SUSPENDED

The first day of Riḍván,
 The ninth day of Riḍván,
 The twelfth day of Riḍván,
 The anniversary of the declaration of the Báb,
 The anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh,
 The anniversary of the birth of the Báb,
 The anniversary of the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh,
 The anniversary of the martyrdom of the Báb,
 The feast of Naw-Rúz.

NOTE: 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in one of His Tablets addressed to a believer of Nayríz, Persia, has written the following: *Nine days in the year have been appointed on which work is forbidden. Some of these days have been specifically mentioned in the Book. The rest follow as corollaries to the Text . . . Work on the Day of the Covenant (Fête Day of 'Abdu'l-Bahá), however, is not prohibited. Celebration of that day is left to the discretion of the friends. Its observation is not obligatory. The days pertaining to the Abhá Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) and the Primal Point (the Báb), that is to say these nine days, are the only ones on which work connected with trade, commerce, industry and agriculture is not allowed. In like manner, work connected with any form of employment, whether governmental or otherwise, should be suspended.*

As a corollary of this Tablet it follows that the anniversaries of the birth and ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are not to be regarded as days on which work is prohibited. The celebration of these two days, however, is obligatory.

Bahá'ís in East and West, holding administrative positions, whether public or private, should exert the utmost effort to obtain special leave from their superiors to enable them to observe these nine holy days.

4. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL GLEANED FROM NABÍL'S NARRATIVE REGARDING THE BAHÁ'Í CALENDAR

THE Badí' Calendar (Bahá'í Calendar) has been taken by me from the *Kitáb-i-Asmá'*, one of the works written by the Báb. As I have observed in these days that certain believers are inclined to regard the year in which Bahá'u'lláh departed from Baghdád to Constantinople as marking the beginning of the Badí' Calendar, I have requested Mírzá Áqá Ján, the amanuensis of Bahá'u'lláh, to ascertain His will and desire concerning this matter. Bahá'u'lláh answered and said: 'The year sixty A.H.¹

¹ (i.e., 1260 A.H.)

(1844 A.D.), the year of the Declaration of the Báb, must be regarded as the beginning of the Badí' Calendar.' The Declaration of the Báb took place on the evening preceding the fifth day of Jamádíyu'l-Avval, of the year 1260 A.H. It has been ordained that the solar calendar be followed and that the vernal Equinox, the day of Naw-Rúz, be regarded as the New Year's Day of the Badí' Calendar. The year sixty, in which the fifth day of Jamádíyu'l-Avval coincided with the sixty-fifth day after Naw-Rúz, has accordingly been regarded as the first year

of the Badí' Calendar. As in that year, the day of Naw-Rúz, the vernal Equinox, preceded by sixty-six days the date of the Declaration of the Báb, I have therefore, throughout my history, regarded the Naw-Rúz of the year sixty-one A.H. (the Naw-Rúz immediately following the Declaration of the Báb) as the first Naw-Rúz of the Badí' Calendar. I have accordingly considered the Naw-Rúz of this present year, the year 1306 A.H., which is the 47th solar year after the Declaration of the Báb, as the 46th Naw-Rúz of the Badí' Calendar.

Soon after Bahá'u'lláh had left the fortress of 'Akká and was dwelling in the house of Malik, in that city, He commanded me to transcribe the text of the Badí' Calendar and to instruct the believers in its details. On the very day in which I received His command, I composed, in verse and prose, an exposition of the main features of that Calendar and presented it to him. The versified copy, being now unavailable, I am herein transcribing the version in prose. The days of the week are named as follows:

<i>Days</i>	<i>Arabic Name</i>	<i>English Name</i>	<i>Translation</i>
1st	Jalál	Saturday	Glory
2nd	Jamál	Sunday	Beauty
3rd	Kamál	Monday	Perfection
4th	Fidál	Tuesday	Grace
5th	'Idál	Wednesday	Justice
6th	Istijlál	Thursday	Majesty
7th	Istiqlál	Friday	Independence

The names of the months, which are the same as the days of each month, are as follows:

<i>Month</i>	<i>Arabic Name</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>First Days</i>
1st	Bahá	Splendour	March 21
2nd	Jalál	Glory	April 9
3rd	Jamál	Beauty	April 28
4th	'Aẓamat	Grandeur	May 17
5th	Núr	Light	June 5
6th	Raḥmat	Mercy	June 24
7th	Kalimát	Words	July 13
8th	Kamál	Perfection	August 1
9th	Asmá'	Names	August 20
10th	'Izzat	Might	September 8
11th	Mashíyyat	Will	September 27
12th	'Ilm	Knowledge	October 16
13th	Qudrat	Power	November 4
14th	Qawl	Speech	November 23
15th	Masá'il	Questions	December 12
16th	Sharaf	Honour	December 31
17th	Sultán	Sovereignty	January 19
18th	Mulk	Dominion	February 7
19th	'Alá'	Loftiness	March 2

Ayyám-i-Há (Intercalary Days) 26 February to 1 March inclusive—
four in ordinary and five in leap years.

The first day of each month is thus the day of Bahá, and the last day of each month the day of 'Alá'.

The Báb has regarded the solar year, of 365 days, 5 hours, and fifty odd minutes, as consist-

ing of 19 months of 19 days each, with the addition of certain intercalary days. He has named the New Year's Day, which is the day of Naw-Rúz, the day of Bahá, of the month of Bahá. He has ordained the month of 'Alá' to be

the month of fasting, and has decreed that the day of Naw-Rúz should mark the termination of that period. As the Báb did not specifically define the place for the four days and the fraction of a day in the Badí' Calendar, the people of the *Bayán* were at a loss as to how they should regard them. The revelation of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* in the city of 'Akká resolved this problem and settled the issue. Bahá'u'lláh designated those days as the Ayyám-i-Há and ordained that they should immediately precede the month of 'Alá', which is the month of fasting. He enjoined upon His followers to devote these days to feasting, rejoicing, and charity. Immediately upon the termination of these intercalary days, Bahá'u'lláh ordained the month of fasting to begin. I have heard it stated that some of the people of the *Bayán*, the followers of Mírzá Yaḥyá, have regarded these intercalary days as coming immediately after the month of 'Alá', thus terminating their fast five days before the day of Naw-Rúz. This, notwithstanding the explicit text of the *Bayán* which states that the day of Naw-Rúz must needs be the first day of the month of Bahá, and must follow immediately after the last day of the month of 'Alá'. Others, aware of this contradiction, have started their fasting on the fifth day of the month of 'Alá', and included the intercalary days within the period of fasting.

Every fourth year the number of the intercalary days is raised from four to five. The day of Naw-Rúz falls on the 21st of March only if the vernal Equinox precedes the setting of the sun on that day. Should the vernal Equinox take place after sunset, Naw-Rúz will have to be celebrated on the following day.

The Báb has, moreover, in His Writings revealed in the Arabic tongue, divided the years following the date of His Revelation into cycles of nineteen years each. The names of the years in each cycle are as follows:

1. Alif	A.
2. Bá'	B.
3. Ab	Father.
4. Dál	D.
5. Báb	Gate.
6. Váv	V.
7. Abad	Eternity.
8. Jád	Generosity.
9. Bahá	Splendour.
10. Ḥubb	Love.
11. Bahháj	Delightful.
12. Javáb	Answer.
13. Aḥad	Single.
14. Vahháb	Bountiful.
15. Vidád	Affection.
16. Badí'	Beginning.
17. Bahí	Luminous.
18. Abhá	Most Luminous.
19. Váḥid	Unity.

Each cycle of nineteen years is called Váḥid. Nineteen cycles constitute a period called Kull-i-Shay'. The numerical value of the word Váḥid is nineteen, that of Kull-i-Shay' is 361. Váḥid signifies unity, and is symbolic of the unity of God.

The Báb has, moreover, stated that this system of His is dependent upon the acceptance and good-pleasure of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. One word from Him would suffice either to establish it for all time, or to annul it forever.

For instance, the date of the 21st of April, 1930, which is the first day of Riḍván, and which according to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* must coincide with the 'thirteenth day of the second Bahá'í month,' and which fell this year (1930) on Monday, would, according to the system of the Badí' Calendar, be described as follows:

'The day of Kamál, the day of Qudrat, of the month of Jalál, of the year Bahháj, of the fifth Váḥid, of the first Kull-i-Shay'.'