

Ayyám-i-Há

Selected Writings to internalize and digest before the coming Celebration!

This Celebration has been ordained in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas:

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 Day-Star 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 behoveth 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 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 26.)

Elucidation of phrases within the above passage:

1. 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*.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 178.)

2. We have ordained that these ... shall be the manifestations of the letter Há

Known as the Ayyám-i-Há (the Days of Ha), the Intercalary Days have the distinction of being associated with "the letter Ha". The abjad numerical value of this Arabic letter is five, which corresponds to the potential number of intercalary days. The letter "Ha" has been given several spiritual meanings in the Holy Writings, among which is as a symbol of the Essence of God.

3. these days of giving that precede the season of restraint

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-Rúz.

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 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.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 18 January 1982; cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 301.)

How can we help the poor and needy through our charity:

Many churches distribute food baskets to the needy during their holiday season. The Bahá’ís can help with such projects and can observe Ayyám-i-Há or various Bahá’í Holy Days in a similar manner.

(NSA USA - *Developing Distinctive Bahá’í Communities.*)

Story of one Ayyám-i-Há with Bahá’u’lláh:

The same believer (Hájí Muhammad-Táhir-i-Malmiri, the father of Adíb Taherzadeh) has left to posterity an account of one of the feasts at which he had the honour to be present. These are his words recorded in his memoirs:

In the spring season Bahá’u’lláh used to stay at Mazra’ih for some time. Mazra’ih is situated at a distance of about two farsangs [about 12 kilometers] from the city of ‘Akká. To attain His presence I used to go to Mazra’ih in the daytime and at night I stayed at the Pilgrim House. On the first day of the Ayyám-i-Há [Intercalary days] one of the pilgrims had invited Bahá’u’lláh and all the believers in ‘Akká to lunch. I too went to Mazra’ih. Early in the morning a large tent was pitched in front of the entrance to the garden on a delightful open space. That morning all the believers, numbering almost two hundred, consisting of those who were living in the Holy Land and the pilgrims, came to Mazra’ih.

Around the time of noon, the Blessed Beauty came down from the Mansion and majestically entered the tent. All the believers were standing in front of the tent. Then Mírzá Áqá Ján, standing in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh chanted a dawn prayer for fasting which had been revealed on that day. When the prayer was finished the Blessed Beauty instructed all to be seated. Every person sat down in the place where he was standing. His blessed Person spoke to us and after His utterances were ended He asked, ‘What happened to the Feast, is it really going to happen?’

Thereupon a few friends hurried away and soon lunch was brought in. They placed a low table in the middle of the tent. His blessed person and all the Aghsán sat around the table and since there was more room, He called some by name to join Him. Among these my name was called; He said, ‘Áqá Táhir, come and sit.’ So I went in and sat at the table in His presence. At some point Bahá’u’lláh said, ‘We have become tired of eating. Those who have had enough may leave.’ I immediately arose and His blessed Person left. At first the food which was left over on His plate was divided among the friends, and then group after group entered the tent and had their meal. Everyone at this feast partook of both physical and spiritual food. I got the prayer of fasting from Mírzá Áqá Ján and copied it for myself. Then in the evening all the friends returned to ‘Akká. But the Master was not present that day.

Prayer for Ayyám-i-Há:

My God, my Fire and my Light! The days which Thou hast named the Ayyám-i-Há (the Days of Ha, Intercalary days) in Thy Book have begun, O Thou Who art the King of names, and the fast which Thy most exalted Pen hath enjoined unto all who are in the kingdom of Thy creation to observe is approaching. I entreat Thee, O my Lord, by these days and by all such as have during that period clung to the cord of Thy commandments, and laid hold on the handle of Thy precepts, to grant that unto every soul may be assigned a place within the precincts of Thy court, and a seat at the revelation of the splendors of the light of Thy countenance.

These, O my Lord, are Thy servants whom no corrupt inclination hath kept back from what Thou didst send down in Thy Book. They have bowed themselves before Thy Cause, and received Thy Book with such resolve as is born of Thee, and observed what Thou hadst prescribed unto them, and chosen to follow that which had been sent down by Thee.

Thou seest, O my Lord, how they have recognized and confessed whatsoever Thou hast revealed in Thy Scriptures. Give them to drink, O my Lord, from the hands of Thy graciousness the waters of Thine eternity. Write down, then, for them the recompense ordained for him that hath immersed himself in the ocean of Thy presence, and attained unto the choice wine of Thy meeting.

I implore Thee, O Thou the King of kings and the Pitier of the downtrodden, to ordain for them the good of this world and of the world to come. Write down for them, moreover, what none of Thy creatures hath discovered, and number them with those who have circled round Thee, and who move about Thy throne in every world of Thy worlds.

Thou, truly, art the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 66.)

Other related Passages:

1. ...relative to the last Nineteen Day Feast, Shoghi Effendi sees no objection if the friends choose to celebrate it on one of the intercalary days. They may also celebrate it during the month of fasting, provided they abstain from food.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 2 August 1929; cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 243.)

2. 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-Rúz.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 19 March 1938; cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 302.)