

of a new cycle of time for humanity. Each new religious calendar has, however, usually incorporated some element of the past as well. Thus, for example, the Christian calendar is based on the preceding Roman calendar and, although a solar calendar, incorporates lunar elements of the older Jewish calendar in the way that the date for Easter is set. The Islamic calendar incorporates elements of the calendar used in Arabia before Islam—for example, for the month of pilgrimage.

The History of the Calendar for the Bahá'í Era. The Bahá'í Faith has its own calendar, symbolizing that this is a new day for humanity. It is a solar calendar with nineteen months of nineteen days each. A number of days, varying between four and five, are needed to make this up to a solar calendar; they are known as the Intercalary Days. This is based on the calendar created by the Báb and is called the Badí' calendar. Bahá'u'lláh adopted this calendar and gave directions for a number of elements in it that had not been specified by the Báb. He directed, for example, that the Intercalary Days were to fall before the month of fasting and that the beginning of the calendar should be the Naw-Rúz preceding the declaration of the Báb.

The names of the months of the Badí' calendar were taken by the Báb from a Shí'í dawn prayer for the month of the Islamic Fast (Ramadán) revealed by the fifth Shí'í Imám, Muhammad al-Báqir, who urged his followers to recite the prayer because “if people knew the greatness of this supplication before God, the speed with which it would be answered, they would certainly kill each other with swords in order to obtain it. And if I took an oath that the Most Great Name of God is in this prayer, I would be stating the truth. Thus, when you recite this supplication, recite it with all concentration and humility and keep it hidden from other than his people.”

This prayer by Muhammad al-Báqir begins: “I beseech Thee by Thy Splendor (bahá=) at its most splendid (abhá) for all Thy Splendor (bahá=) is truly resplendent (bahíyy). I, verily, O my God! beseech Thee by the fullness of Thy Splendor (bahá=).” The prayer then goes through the other nineteen names in the same pattern in the order in which they appear as months of the Badí' calendar. (This opening line of this prayer appears in the Seven Proofs immediately after the Hadith Kumayl. . . .)1

Hence the Badí' calendar may be thought of as the Báb's way of honoring a text that was singled out by the fifth Imam as containing the Greatest Names of God. Thus this was a way for the Báb covertly to point to Bahá'u'lláh, as He did in many of His other writings. In the Persian Bayán, the Báb says that the first month of each year B, which is the month Bahá' is dedicated to Him whom God shall make manifest (Bayán váhid 5, chapter 3). In the Arabic Bayán váhid 9, chapter 17), the Báb also commanded His followers to entertain every nineteen days, even if one is only able to offer water—the beginning of the Nineteen Day Feast.

The Báb ordained Naw-Rúz and the day of His Declaration as holy days. Bahá'u'lláh confirmed these in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and added the first,

ninth and twelfth day of Ridván and the birthdays of both Himself and the Báb. Later `Abdu'l-Bahá add the Martyrdom of the Báb and the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as the Day of the Covenant on which work need not be suspended. Shoghi Effendi then added the Ascension of `Abdu'l-Bahá as another holy day on which work need not be suspended.

In about 1870, Bahá'u'lláh asked Nabíl-A`zam, the author of *The Dawn-Breakers*, to prepare a memorandum on the Badí` calendar. Nabíl went through the *Kitábu'l-Asmá*, one of the last and longest of the books of the Báb, and extracted such matters as the names of the days of the week, the names of the nineteen days of the month and the names of the nineteen years that go to make a cycle of years called a váhid (unity). Nineteen váhids of nineteen years each make a Kullu Shay' (all things, 361 years). Shoghi Effendi translated this memorandum and published it in each of the volumes of *The Bahá'í World* (from volume 4 through volume 20).

This memorandum together with the instructions given in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* resolved most of the issues regarding the Badí` calendar. However, discrepancies remained. For example, Bahá'í communities in the West observed the Bahá'í holy days according to a solar reckoning, while those of the East observed many of them according to a lunar reckoning. These and other matters that remained to be resolved have now been dealt with in the July 10, 2014, message from the Universal House of Justice. When `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi were asked about some of these points, they both replied that Bahá'u'lláh had stated that these were points to be decided by the Universal House of Justice.

The Means for the Determination of Naw-Rúz. The first point concerns the fixing of the day of Naw-Rúz. Bahá'u'lláh has stated in the *Questions and Answers* (no. 35, p. 117) appended to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* that "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 entry of the sun into Aries (that is, the Spring Equinox) is an astronomical event and, therefore, occurs at one time for all places on earth. At that point in time, some places will be before sunset and some after. It was, therefore, necessary to fix the point on the earth's surface where the sunset would determine on which day Naw-Rúz falls. The Universal House of Justice has determined that Tehran, the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh, will be the place that will determine the day of Naw-Rúz. The birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh thus becomes effectively the new Bahá'í religious meridian.

The Accommodation of the Lunar Character of the Twin Holy Birthdays with the Solar Calendar. The second point that required resolution was the question of how to handle the fact that Bahá'u'lláh has stated in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (v. 110) that His own birth and that of the Báb should be celebrated as "twin days," since they fall on consecutive days in the Islamic calendar (1st and 2nd Muharram) and, indeed, that "These two days are accounted as one in the sight of God." (*Questions and Answers* no. 2, p. 104). There were two possible solutions to this question. The twin holy days could have followed the

Islamic calendar and been celebrated on 1 and 2 Muharram each year. However, there are difficulties associated with that. The dating of the Islamic calendar is somewhat chaotic and depends not on astronomical calculations but on actual sightings of the new moon, which, of course, vary from place to place (they are usually one day earlier in the West compared to the East) and depend on local weather conditions, so that whatever the Universal House of Justice decided upon as the reference point for fixing 1 Muharram, a large number of Bahá'í communities would always be out of step with that date as observed by the local Muslim communities. Furthermore, it makes the planning of events to commemorate the holy days difficult because one cannot be sure when they will fall until the new moon is sighted one day before the holy day. The other possibility was to have a luni-solar solution where the days are fixed in relation to both the solar and lunar calendar.

The Universal House of Justice has decided to adopt the latter solution, so the twin holy days “will now be observed on the first and the second day following the occurrence of the eighth new moon after Naw-Rúz, as determined in advance by astronomical tables using Tehran as the point of reference.” This statement both fixes the place which will determine the occurrence of the twin holy days and determines that it will depend on astronomical tables rather than actual sightings of the new moon.

The Fixing of the Dates of the Holy Days within the Badí Calendar. The third point that required a definitive decision was to fix the various Bahá'í holy days within the Badí calendar. The problem is that there are discrepancies between various reports of when particular historical events occurred, mainly due to the above-described confusions over the Islamic calendar. Fortunately, however, scattered throughout the Bahá'í scriptures are statements of the exact date in the Badí calendar when these holy days should be observed. Hence the Universal House of Justice has “decided to set aside certain discrepancies in the historical record” and fix the Bahá'í holy days “in accordance with explicit statements of Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi.” This means that, both because of this decision and the fact that Naw-Rúz will now not always occur on the March 21 but on whatever day the spring equinox occurs, the Bahá'í holy days will fall on days different from those on which we have been used to celebrating them.

The start of the year in the Badí calendar is fixed by an astronomical event, and thus there is no need for elaborate formulas to determine whether there will be four or five intercalary days in a given year. The Badí calendar is self-correcting and will always be aligned to the solar year.

As the Universal House of Justice writes: “The adoption of a new calendar in each dispensation is a symbol of the power of Divine Revelation to reshape human perception of material, social, and spiritual reality. Through it, sacred moments are distinguished, humanity's place in time and space reimagined, and the rhythm of life recast. Next Naw-Rúz [in 2015] will mark yet another historic step in the manifestation of the unity of the people of Bahá and the

unfoldment of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order.”

The translations related to the Shi`i prayer for the fast are by Stephen N. Lambden and may be found at hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-Biblical-islam-BBst/dawnP.htm.

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