

because Bahá'ís do not believe that fighting is the way to solve problems.

If a person does a job to the best of his or her ability, in a spirit of service to others, this is another way of worshipping God.

A Bahá'í should be honest, trustworthy and fair. He or she should not judge other people, nor spread gossip about them. A Bahá'í should always be loving, kind and generous, thoughtful and considerate of others, patient, hospitable - and humble.

MEETING TOGETHER

The Bahá'í Faith has a calendar of its own. There are 19 months in a year, and 19 days in a month. This adds up to 361 days so there are 4 or 5 days extra to make up the full year. Once each Bahá'í month, Bahá'ís meet together for a "Feast". There are 3 parts to this. First there are prayers together. Then there is discussion on local matters. Then there is a social gathering. Bahá'ís should always attend the Feast if at all possible, because it is here that the unity is built which is the basis of the Bahá'í community.

There are also 11 Holy Days commemorating various events in Bahá'í history. On 9 of these days Bahá'ís should not go to work or to school if they are allowed to take time off.

MARRIAGE

A Bahá'í has complete freedom of choice when looking for a husband or wife. But when a couple wish to marry, both sets of parents must agree to the wedding. The parents must get to know the other person well enough to be able to tell if the couple are likely to be happy together. This is the way to preserve family unity, which is very important to Bahá'ís. The wedding ceremony is very simple: the couple each make a statement in front of witnesses.

Then they can add whatever prayers, music and so on that they wish.

Bahá'ís believe that the main purpose of marriage is to rear children in a happy, secure environment. If a couple are spiritually united, they will be together in the next world too.

DIVORCE

Divorce is only allowed if husband and wife reach the point where they can no longer live together because they have come to dislike one another. If this happens, it is up to the parents and other relatives of the couple to try and bring them together again. If, after being separated for a year, the couple still wish to divorce, they can do so.

BURIAL

When a person dies, the soul, which is all important, passes to the next world. But the body must also be treated with respect and there is a special prayer which is to be said when a Bahá'í is buried.

CHILDREN

Bahá'ís believe that a child is a human being from the time of conception, so abortion is rarely justified.

There is no baptism or christening of children - up to the age of 15 they are automatically accepted as part of the Bahá'í community.

Bahá'í children must be taught about all the religions of the world so that when they reach the age of 15 they can decide for themselves.

Bahá'ís try to bring up their children to be friendly with all people, regardless of race, nationality or religion, because Bahá'ís believe that mankind should be like one family.

HEALTH

Bahá'ís should not drink alcohol or take drugs nor should they indulge in sex outside marriage - none of these things helps the soul to progress. Smoking is also very strongly discouraged. There are no special laws on diet but Bahá'ís believe that eventually meat will no longer be eaten because "... our natural food is that which grows out of the ground."

FASTING

Bahá'ís fast for one Bahá'í month in the year. This means that they do not eat or drink for 12 hours from sunrise to sunset each day.

Children under the age of 15 are exempt, so are pregnant and nursing mothers, people who are ill, people who are travelling a long distance, and those over 70 years old. The fast is a time to concentrate on spiritual things rather than material things.

ORGANISATION

In each area the Bahá'ís elect a Local Spiritual Assembly to organise their affairs. This is done every year by secret ballot, after prayers have been said, and without any nominations or canvassing. In each country there is also a National Spiritual Assembly, and every 5 years a world body is elected, called the Universal House of Justice. Bahá'ís should support these bodies with their prayers and follow their guidance and they should turn to them if they have a problem.

Only Bahá'ís can give money to support the Bahá'í Faith, but how much they give and how often is between them and God.

TEACHING THE FAITH

Bahá'ís think that everyone has the right to know about the Bahá'í Faith and that it is the duty of the Bahá'ís to tell them. But Bahá'ís should not pester people if they do not want to know. If a person does his or her best to behave like a perfect Bahá'í, this will teach people a lot about what Bahá'ís believe anyway.

This is what being a Bahá'í really means.

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