

# Ridván

The festival of Ridván commemorates Bahá'u'lláh's declaration in Bahá'í year 20, or 1863 that He was a Manifestation of God and the bearer of a new revelation. The 12-day festival begins at sunset on 13 Jalál<sup>7</sup> and continues until sunset on 5 Jamál.<sup>9</sup> For Bahá'ís it is the 'Most Great Festival'.



Whilst imprisoned in Tehran in 1852, Bahá'u'lláh received the Divine summons that He was the Manifestation or Messenger of God who would unite the peoples of the world, as promised in the scriptures of all the great religions and particularly by His forerunner, the Báb. However, He did not reveal His station for ten years. After His release He was exiled with His family from Persia to Baghdad, then part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1863 the Persian ambassador demanded that He

be exiled even further, from Baghdad to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul).

During the ten years He lived in Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh had become a greatly respected figure in the city, beloved to high and low alike. Prior to His departure, Bahá'u'lláh took up residence in a garden next to the Tigris River in order to receive guests who wished to pay their respects and bid their farewells. Bahá'u'lláh designated the garden as the Garden of Ridván. 'Ridván' means 'paradise'.

Bahá'ís celebrate three Holy Days during this festival: the first day of Ridván on 13 Jalál<sup>7</sup> when Bahá'u'lláh entered the garden; the ninth day on 2 Jamál<sup>8</sup> when His family joined Him; and the twelfth day on 5 Jamál<sup>9</sup> when He departed for Constantinople. During this time, Bahá'u'lláh announced His mission and station to a small group of His family and friends: He was, He told them, the Promised One foretold by the Báb. He called this festival 'the King of Festivals' and referred to it as 'the Day of supreme felicity' and 'the Divine Springtime'. 'This is the Day,' He proclaimed, 'whereon naught can be seen except the splendours of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord.'

On the twelfth and final day of His stay in the garden, Bahá'u'lláh mounted a fine roan stallion and, amidst displays of grief and affection from the general populace, He, His family and selected companions set out on their three-month journey to Constantinople.

The elections for Bahá'í local and national spiritual assemblies are held during the festival of Ridván and are incorporated into the festivities.



<sup>7</sup> 20 April when Naw-Rúz is 20 March and 21 April when Naw-Rúz is 21 March.

<sup>8</sup> 28 April when Naw-Rúz is 20 March and 29 April when Naw-Rúz is 21 March.

<sup>9</sup> 1 May when Naw-Rúz is 20 March and 2 May when Naw-Rúz is 21 March.