

BAHÁ'Í HOLY DAYS

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What is the significance of the Badi' Calendar?

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.

Letter of the Universal House of Justice, 10 July 2014, to the Bahá'ís of the World

What are the origins of the Badi' Calendar?

The Báb introduced the calendar and its broad pattern of periods and cycles, months and days. Bahá'u'lláh provided essential clarifications and additions. Aspects were elucidated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and arrangements for its adoption in the West were put in place at the direction of Shoghi Effendi, as described in the volumes of *The Bahá'í World*. Still, ambiguities surrounding some Islamic and Gregorian dates, as well as difficulties in the correlation of historical observances and astronomical events with explicit statements in the Text, left certain issues unresolved. When responding to questions concerning the calendar, both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi left these matters to the Universal House of Justice.

Letter of the Universal House of Justice, 10 July 2014, to the Bahá'ís of the World

What is the definition of a Bahá'í day?

With reference to your question in connection with the observance of Bahá'í Holy Days; the Bahá'í day begins and ends at sunset. The night preceding a Holy Day is therefore included in the day, and consequently work during that period is forbidden.

Shoghi Effendi, Messages of Shoghi Effendi to the Indian Subcontinent, 1923–1957, p. 160

Where can the Gregorian dates for Naw Rúz, Riḍván and other Holy Days be found for each year?

They are available at <http://admin.bahai.org.uk/badi-calendar/>

Should Holy Days be observed on the prescribed day?

In connection with the nine Holy Days ... the friends should consider it obligatory to celebrate them on the prescribed day before sunset.

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, 24 December 1939
quoted in Lights of Guidance, p. 435

With reference to your question in connection with the observance of Bahá'í Holy Days; the Bahá'í day begins and ends at sunset. The night preceding a Holy Day is therefore included in the day, and consequently work during that period is forbidden.

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 17 July 1937, in Dawn of a New Day, p. 68

As long as the meeting begins before sunset it is considered to be held on the day which comes to an end with that sunset.

Letter from the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 23 June 1964,
quoted in Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities

Who can attend Holy Day observances?

Anybody may attend Holy Day observances, including non-Bahá'ís and Bahá'ís without voting rights.

When should the Tablets of Visitation be read?

Your e-mail message of 18 July 1995 ... asking whether it is mandatory for the Tablets of Visitation to be read on the occasion of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh or the Martyrdom of the Báb, was referred to our Department for reply. In a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, it is stated, while it is only natural for the friends to recite these Tablets on the anniversaries associated with the Central Figures of our Faith, no texts have been located by the Research Department of the House of Justice which make the use of these Tablets obligatory.

Email written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 31 August 1995, to an individual believer quoted in Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities

In answer to an earlier letter on this subject, the House of Justice stated that nothing has been found in the Writings requiring the believers to stand and face the Qiblih every time the Tablets of Visitation are recited. The House of Justice feels that it is very important that no issue be made about such minor details. When, however, one is actually in, or within the precincts of one of the Holy Shrines, it is an act of simple reverence to stand and face the Shrine when the Tablet of Visitation is recited.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 21 July 1994, to a Local Spiritual Assembly and quoted in Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities.

When should work be suspended?

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.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in The Bahá'í World, Vol. VII, p. 537

From time to time questions have arisen about the application of the law of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas on the observance of Bahá'í Holy Days. As you know, the recognition of Bahá'í Holy Days in at least ninety-five countries of the world is an important and highly significant objective of the Nine Year Plan [1964–1973], and is directly linked with the recognition of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh by the civil authorities as an independent religion enjoying its own rights and privileges.

Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p. 69

How important is it to be excused from work?

He wishes also to stress the fact that, according to our Bahá'í laws, work is forbidden on our Nine Holy Days. Believers who have independent businesses or shops should refrain from working on these days. Those who are in government employ should, on religious grounds, make an effort to be excused from work; all believers, whoever their employers, should do likewise. If the government, or other employers, refuse to grant them these days off, they are not required to forfeit their employment, but they should

make every effort to have the independent status of their Faith recognized and their right to hold their own religious Holy Days acknowledged.

Shoghi Effendi, in Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p. 55

Each year, a letter for employers will be shared on NEWS, listing the Holy Days for that year and asking that any Bahá'í employees be excused on those days. The letter will then be available to download from <https://bahaidata.com/welcome/bahai-holy-days/>.

Should children be excused from school?

It is the responsibility of the Local Spiritual Assembly and Bahá'í parents to ensure that children observe Bahá'í Holy Days in ways that are meaningful to them educationally and spiritually. Although schools are meant to allow children to be excused from school on Holy Days, it is ultimately up to the individual school to decide whether or not to do this. Especially when the child will be sitting major exams in that year, it may not be permitted.

Steps should be taken to have Bahá'í children excused, on religious grounds, from attending school on Bahá'í Holy Days wherever possible. The Guardian has said:

Regarding children: at fifteen a Bahá'í is of age as far as keeping the laws of the Aqdas is concerned—prayer, fasting, etc. But children under fifteen should certainly observe the Bahá'í Holy Days, and not go to school, if this can be arranged on these nine days.

Letter from the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, in Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986, no. 29

Each year, a letter for schools will be shared on NEWS, listing the Holy Days for that year and asking that any Bahá'í student be excused on those days. The letter will then be available to download from <https://bahaidata.com/welcome/bahai-holy-days/>.

Should businesses owned by Bahá'ís close?

The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 17 November 1975 and in reply to your specific question, 'May our Bahá'í-owned retail mattress store remain open in the care of our non-Bahá'í employees on the Holy Days when we refrain from working?', has instructed us to say that in shops or stores owned by Bahá'ís, the fact that they may have non-Bahá'ís in employment does not exempt the Bahá'í owners from closing their businesses on Bahá'í Holy Days.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 30 November 1975, to an individual believer and quoted in Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities.

Should gifts be given or exchanged on Holy Days?

Gift giving is not an integral part of any Bahá'í Holy Day, although it is not forbidden. Bahá'u'lláh set aside the Intercalary Days as days of gift giving:

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.’

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 18 January 1982, in Lights of Guidance, p. 301

Should Bahá’í institutions function on Holy Days?

This distinction between institutions that are under full or partial Bahá’í control is of fundamental importance. Institutions that are entirely managed by Bahá’ís are, for reasons that are only too obvious, under the obligation of enforcing all the laws and ordinances of the Faith, especially those whose observance constitutes a matter of conscience. There is no reason, no justification whatever, that they should act otherwise... The point which should be always remembered is that the issue in question is essentially a matter of conscience, and as such is of a binding effect upon all believers.

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 2 October 1935, to a National Spiritual Assembly, in Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986

Special Bahá’í functions such as the election of the Local Spiritual Assembly or the National Convention may be, and are, held on Bahá’í Holy Days. Routine work associated with the institutions of the Faith, however, should not be carried on, unless of an essential or emergency nature.

The basic principle that institutions that are entirely managed by Bahá’ís are under the obligation of obeying the Bahá’í laws regarding the observance of Holy Days is clear. A problem, however, arises in relation to service institutions and work of a service nature that cannot be postponed. There are, of course, many Bahá’í activities that are carried on the Holy Days in addition to the celebration of the Holy Days themselves, such as the election of Local Spiritual Assemblies on the First Day of Ridván, the holding of the National Convention, which may well coincide with one or more Holy Days, and other praiseworthy activities. It is not this kind of ‘work’ that is prohibited. Thus, there would be no objection to the holding of sessions of a Summer School or Weekend School on a Holy Day – although they might well be modified in form in recognition of the particular day, and would give time for the actual commemoration ...

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 3 December, 1984, to a National Spiritual Assembly and quoted in Developing Distinctive Bahá’í Communities.

Concerning your question about holding meetings of consultation on Bahá’í Holy Days, we have been requested to share with you an excerpt from the translation of a Persian letter from the beloved Guardian dated 3 January 1929 to an individual believer:

On the Bahá’í festivals and solemn commemorations it is preferable for Assemblies, Committees and Bahá’í Institutions to suspend their activities. However, final decision in these matters rests with the Universal House of Justice.

The Universal House of Justice feels that the above directive of the Guardian is adequate for the time being. It should be clear, however, that should emergencies occur

which require the holding of meetings of Bahá'í institutions on the nine Holy Days of the Faith, this would be permissible.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 21 July 1982 and quoted in Lights of Guidance, p. 299

EXPLANATION OF THE VARIOUS HOLY DAYS

Naw-Rúz

Naw-Rúz is an ancient festival which has been celebrated for thousands of years:

All the days are blessed, but this feast is the national fete of Persia. The Persians have been holding it for several thousand years past.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 11

It is the vernal equinox and the first day of spring. In the Persian culture gifts are exchanged at Naw-Rúz and visits are paid to the person who might be considered the elder or patriarch of the community. Today Naw-Rúz continues to be marked by Persians, Afghans, Kurds and Parsees of various religious backgrounds. In this regard, the Universal House of Justice has written:

Naw-Rúz itself was originally a Zoroastrian religious festival, but gradually its Zoroastrian connotation has almost been forgotten. Iranians, even after their conversion to Islam, have been observing it as a national festival. Now Naw-Rúz has become a Bahá'í Holy Day and is being observed throughout the world, but, in addition to the Bahá'í observance, many Iranian Bahá'ís continue to carry out their past cultural traditions in connection with this Feast.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia, 26 May 1982 and quoted in Lights of Guidance p. 554

The Universal House of Justice has now given guidance on how the date for Naw-Ruz is determined.

'The Festival of Naw-Ruz falleth on the day that the sun entereth the sign of Aries,' Bahá'u'lláh explains in His Most Holy Book, 'even should this occur no more than one minute before sunset.' However, details have, until now, been left undefined. We have decided that Tíhrán, the birthplace of the Abhá Beauty, will be the spot on the earth that will serve as the standard for determining, by means of astronomical computations from reliable sources, the moment of the vernal equinox in the northern hemisphere and thereby the day of Naw-Rúz for the Bahá'í world.

Letter of the Universal House of Justice, 10 July 2014, to the Bahá'ís of the World

It should also be noted that Naw-Rúz and the Nineteen Day Feast of Bahá that fall on the same date are separate functions:

...The Naw-Rúz Feast ... has nothing to do with the Nineteen Day Feast. The Nineteen Day Feast is administrative in function whereas the Naw-Rúz is our New Year, a Feast of hospitality and rejoicing.

Letter written on behalf of the Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 5 July 1950 and quoted in Lights of Guidance p. 302

The Festival of Riḍván

The Feast of Riḍván (20 April when Naw-Rúz is on 20 March and 21 April when Naw-Rúz is on 21 March), celebrates Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His station. From 13 Jalál to 5 Jamál prior to His journey to Constantinople, Bahá'u'lláh stayed in a garden outside Baghdad, on the banks of the Tigris. Thereafter this garden was called the Garden of 'Riḍván' (meaning 'Paradise'). It was in this Garden, that He declared Himself to be the Promised One of all ages:

As to the significance of that Declaration let Bahá'u'lláh Himself reveal to us its import. Acclaiming that historic occasion as the 'Most Great Festival', the 'King of Festivals', the 'Festival of God', He has, in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas, characterized it as the Day whereon 'all created things were immersed in the sea of purification'...

Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 153-4

The first, ninth and twelfth days are particularly singled out as days on which work is to be suspended (see 'Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas', footnote 29, p.62). Shoghi Effendi explained the significance of these three days:-

As regards various matters you raised in your letters, the reason we commemorate the 1st, 9th and 12th days of Riḍván as Holidays (Holy Days) is because one is the first day, one is the last day, and the third one is the ninth day, which of course is associated with the number 9. All 12 days could not be holidays, therefore these three were chosen.

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 8 June 1952, cited in Lights of Guidance 1983 edition, p. 230

Hand of the Cause of God, Hasan Balyuzi, has also written:

On the ninth day the family of Bahá'u'lláh also moved to the Najíbíyyih, and the twelfth day was appointed for departure. Thus the Festival of Riḍván comprises twelve days.

Balyuzi, King of Glory, p. 175

Shoghi Effendi has advised that, if feasible, the first day of Riḍván should be celebrated at about 3 p.m. On the ninth and twelfth days the believers are free to gather at any time during the day they find convenient (*Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 56). In April British Summer Time will have started, so this will be 4 p.m.

Anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb

At about two hours after sunset on 8 'Azamat (23 May when Naw-Rúz is on 20 March and 24 May when Naw-Rúz is on 21 March), in an upper chamber of His house in Shiraz, the Báb revealed to Mullá Husayn that He was the promised Qá'im:

With this historic Declaration the dawn of an Age that signalizes the consummation of all ages had broken. The first impulse of a momentous Revelation had been communicated to the one 'but for whom', according to the testimony of the Kitáb-i-Iqán, 'God would not have been established upon the seat of His mercy, nor ascended the throne of eternal glory'.

Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 7

Shoghi Effendi advises that, if feasible, the Declaration of the Báb should be celebrated ‘at about two hours after sunset’ (*Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, p. 56). The Declaration is celebrated on 23 May when Naw-Rúz is on 20 March and 24 May when Naw-Rúz is on 21 March.

The Anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh

With the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh draws to a close a period which, in many ways, is unparalleled in the world’s religious history. The first century of the Bahá’í Era had by now run half its course. An epoch, unsurpassed in its sublimity, its fecundity and duration, by any previous Dispensation, and characterised, except for a short interval of three years, by half a century of progressive Revelation, had terminated. The Message proclaimed by the Báb had yielded its golden fruit. The most momentous, though not the most spectacular phase of the Heroic Age had ended. The Sun of Truth, the world’s greatest Luminary, had risen in the Siyáh-Chál of Tihrán, had broken through the clouds which enveloped it in Baghdad, had suffered a momentary eclipse whilst mounting to its zenith in Adrianople and had set finally in ‘Akká, never to reappear ere the lapse of a full millennium.

Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.223

The Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh should be commemorated at 3 a.m. GMT (i.e. 4 a.m. BST) on 13 ‘Azamat (28 May when Naw-Rúz is on 20 March and 29 May when Naw-Rúz is on 21 March).

As the Guardian indicated, the commemoration of the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh should be held, if feasible, at 3 a.m. ... These times should be measured according to the standard time in each area. If daylight saving time is being used in the country, the commemorations should continue to be observed according to standard time. For example, as the United Kingdom is now on daylight saving time, the commemoration of the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh ... should take place at 4:00 a.m., which corresponds to 3:00 a.m. standard time.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 26 June 1995

The Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb

It can ... be regarded in no other light except as the most dramatic, the most tragic event transpiring within the entire range of the first Bahá’í century. Indeed it can be rightly acclaimed as unparalleled in the annals of the lives of all the Founders of the world’s existing religious systems.

Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 55

Shoghi Effendi advises that, if feasible, the Martyrdom of the Báb should be commemorated on 17 Raḥmat (on 9 July when Naw-Rúz is on 20 March and 10 July when it is on 21 March) around noon. This would be 1p.m. British Summer Time.

The Anniversary of the Birth of the Báb

On this day was born the One acclaimed as:

...the ‘Morn of Truth’ and ‘Harbinger of the Most Great Light’, Whose advent at once signalised the termination of the ‘Prophetic Cycle’ and the inception of the ‘Cycle of Fulfilment’, [Who] had simultaneously through His Revelation banished the shades of night that had descended upon His country, and proclaimed the impending rise of that Incomparable Orb Whose radiance was to envelop the whole of mankind.

Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.57

The Anniversary of the Birth of Bahá’u’lláh

The Birth of Bahá’u’lláh marked the arrival of One described by Shoghi Effendi as:

...the Judge, the Lawgiver and Redeemer of all mankind, as the Organizer of the entire planet, as the Unifier of the children of men, as the Inaugurator of the long-awaited millennium, as the Originator of a new ‘Universal Cycle,’ as the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, as the Fountain of the Most Great Justice, as the Proclaimer of the coming of age of the entire human race, as the Creator of a new World Order, and as the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilisation.

Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 93–4

The Twin birthdays

The Festivals of the Twin Birthdays, the Birth of the Báb and the Birth of Bahá’u’lláh, have, in the East, been traditionally observed according to their correspondence to the first and second days of Muḥarram in the Islamic calendar. ‘These two days are accounted as one in the sight of God’, Baha'u'llah affirms. Yet, a letter written on behalf of the Guardian states, ‘In the future, no doubt all of the Holy Days will follow the Solar calendar, and provisions be made as to how the Twin Festivals will be celebrated universally.’ How to satisfy the intrinsic lunar character of these blessed Days within the context of a solar calendar has hitherto been unanswered. We have decided that following the occurrence of the eighth new moon after Naw-Rúz, as determined in advance they will now be observed on the first and the second day by astronomical tables using Tiḥrán as the point of reference. This will result in the observance of the Twin Birthdays moving, year to year, within the months of Maṣḥiyyát, ‘Ilm, and Qudrat of the Badí‘ calendar, or from mid-October to mid-November according to the Gregorian calendar.

Letter of the Universal House of Justice, 10 July 2014, to the Bahá’is of the World

The Anniversary of the Day of the Covenant

This Day was given to the friends by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It is observed (on 25 November when Naw-Rúz is on 20 March and 26 November when it is on 21 March) as the day of the appointment of the Centre of the Covenant. The explanation of how it came to be substituted for the Birthday of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, is related by the late Hand of the Cause H. M. Balyuzi:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá told the Bahá’ís that this day [8 ‘Azamat] was not, under any circumstances, to be celebrated as His day of birth. It was the day of the Declaration of the Báb, exclusively associated with Him. But as the Bahá’ís begged for a day to be celebrated as His, He gave them November 26 [but see note above], to be observed as the day of the appointment of the Centre of the Covenant. It was known as Jaṣḥn-i-A‘zam – (The Greatest Festival), because He was Ghusn-i-A‘zam – The Greatest Branch. In the West it is known as the Day of the Covenant.

Balyuzi, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Centre of the Covenant, p. 523

The Day of the Covenant ... and the Day of the Ascension, ... anniversaries of the birth and the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá must be observed by the friends coming together, but work is not prohibited. In other words the friends must regard observance of these two anniversaries as obligatory – but suspension of work is not to be regarded as obligatory.

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, 21 January 1951, quoted in Lights of Guidance, p. 299

The Anniversary of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Abdu’l-Bahá’s passing at 1 a.m. in Haifa on 6 Qawl marked the close of the Heroic Age of the Faith:

Thus was brought to a close the ministry of One Who was the incarnation, by virtue of the rank bestowed upon Him by His Father, of an institution that has no parallel in the entire field of religious history, a ministry that marks the final stage in the Apostolic, the Heroic and most glorious Age of the Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh.

Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 314

Shoghi Effendi advises that the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá should be commemorated one hour after midnight. The Ascension is commemorated on 27 November when Naw-Rúz is on 20 March and 28 November when it is on 21 March.

As the Guardian indicated, the commemoration of the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh should be held, if feasible, at 3 a.m. on 29 May, and that of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at 1 a.m. on 28 November [but see note above]. These times should be measured according to standard time in each area. If daylight saving time is being used in the country, the commemorations should continue to be observed according to standard time.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 15 March 1992

The Intercalary Days (‘Ayyám-i-Há’)

The Intercalary Days follow the month of Mulk. The number of days of ‘Ayyám-i-Há will vary according to the timing of the vernal equinox. They immediately precede the Fast and are to be devoted to feasting, rejoicing and charity:

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.

In ‘Additional Material Gleaned from Nabíl’s Narrative (Vol. II), Regarding the Bahá’í Calendar’, The Bahá’í World, Vol. XV, p. 691

The Intercalary Days are also designated as a time of gift-giving and hospitality.

The Fast

The Fast is obligatory for all believers (with certain exceptions) between the ages of 15 and 70. The Fast period is the nineteen days of the month of ‘Alá’, following the Intercalary

Days, and ends with Naw-Rúz. During this time no food or drink may be taken from sunrise to sunset. The Fast is essentially a period of spiritual recuperation and serves as a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires (see *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 9).

On 28 December 1999, the Universal House of Justice wrote to the Bahá'ís of the world:

The friends have long been familiar with the great importance which Bahá'u'lláh attaches to daily obligatory prayer and to the observance of the fast, but a number of aspects of the law ... remained to be made universally applicable. This step is now taken. Thus all elements of the laws dealing with obligatory prayer and fasting are, without exception, now applicable.

The following laws dealing with fasting are applicable:

1. *The period of fasting commences with the termination of the Intercalary Days, and ends with the Naw-Rúz Festival.*
2. *Abstinence from food and drink, from sunrise to sunset, is obligatory.*
3. *Fasting is binding on men and women on attaining the age of maturity, which is fixed at 15.*
4. *Exemption from fasting is granted to:*
 - a. *Travellers*
 - i. *Provided the journey exceeds 9 hours.*
 - ii. *Those traveling on foot, providing the journey exceeds 2 hours.*
 - iii. *Those who break their journey for less than 19 days.*
 - iv. *Those who break their journey during the Fast at a place where they are to stay 19 days are exempt from fasting for the first three days from their arrival.*
 - v. *Those who reach home during the Fast must commence fasting from the day of their arrival.*
 - b. *Those who are ill.*
 - c. *Those who are over 70.*
 - d. *Women who are with child.*
 - e. *Women who are nursing.*
 - f. *Women in their courses, provided they perform their ablutions and repeat a specifically revealed verse 95 times a day. [see Synopsis and Codification for this verse]*
 - g. *Those who are engaged in heavy labour, who are advised to show respect for the law by using discretion and restraint when availing themselves of the exemption.*

5. *Vowing to fast (in a month other than the one prescribed for fasting) is permissible. Vows which profit mankind are however preferable in the sight of God.*

Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 38–9

The law regarding fasting, whilst obligatory, is the responsibility of the individual. A Local Spiritual Assembly cannot enforce it on the friends:

But while a universal obligation, the observance of the nineteen day fast has been made by Bahá'u'lláh the sole responsibility of the individual believer. No Assembly has the right to enforce it on the friends, or to hold anybody responsible for not observing it. The believer is free, however, to ask the advice of his Assembly as to the circumstances that would justify him to conscientiously break such a fast. But he is by no means required to do so.

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 9 March 1937, quoted in Lights of Guidance, p. 233