



Nine Holy Days

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Introduction

Do you know what a Holy Day is? It is when something very special happens, something that comes from God. Adam, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh came from God and when They were born Their birthdays became Holy Days and remembered by people who loved Them. When something very important happens in the lifetime of a Messenger of God then that Day becomes a Holy Day too.

The Bahá'ís have nine Holy Days which are especially important and on these nine Days work is forbidden. Some of the Days are happy, like when we remember the time Bahá'u'lláh was born, and others are sad, like when the Báb was killed.

The first Day I would like to tell you about is different from the rest: It is called Naw-Rúz which means New Year.



Naw-Rúz

MARCH 21st

This is a story about a boy. He could have been any boy living in Persia more than a hundred years ago, and he could have been called by any name, for there were many who knew that something wonderful had happened in the world. Let us make up a name for our boy and call him—Aḥmad.

Aḥmad woke up with a warm, happy feeling inside him. He lay in his blanket on the floor and watched the sun rise above the mountains and gently spread its light over the newly-wakened world. A new morning! A new Springtime! A new year! Everything was new. It was Naw-Rúz, the first day of the New Year and the first day of Spring.

Aḥmad jumped out of bed and noticed something lying in a neat pile on a stool near the window. New clothes! New shirt! New trousers! New shoes! He had never had shoes before and he sang as he hurriedly pulled on his clothes and ran out into the sunlit garden. Everything looked new. The sky was deep blue, and trees rich green, the flowers bright reds and blues and yellows. Everything sparkled and gleamed. Even the house. His mother and sisters had scrubbed and swept the inside until everything was spotless, and his father and older brothers had painted the outside a brilliant white. The cool, clear pool in the middle of the garden was like a mirror which reflected the world, and as Aḥmad looked into the water he thanked God for giving him such a beautiful world to live in.

Aḥmad did not want to miss one minute of this first day of Spring and quickly ate his breakfast of milk, bread and cheese before running outside again. Usually in Persia, which is where Aḥmad lived, when it was Naw-Rúz everyone visited each other, gave gifts of food, held parties and had a very happy time. That was quite a long time ago, but people still do the same things today, for Naw-Rúz is a very happy and very special day.

Aḥmad ran through the mud streets of the little town where he

lived shouting a joyful “Happy Naw-Rúz” to everyone he saw. He held his new shoes in his hand for he did not want to get them dusty.

Soon he reached the river which raced down the mountainside. He watched the water, which seemed in such a hurry. Everything was so full of life—the water, the flowers stretching their long necks and opening their pretty petal faces to feel the sun, and the trees so gently spreading their wavy green arms in the air. Even the stones seemed to be singing.

“Something has happened,” thought Aḥmad. “The water knows, the trees know, the flowers know and even the stones know.” A bird was singing in the tree above him. “Who is he singing to?” wondered Aḥmad. “There are no other birds in the tree. Maybe, in his own way, he is singing to God. If I talk to God maybe He will tell me why this Naw-Rúz feels different. And so Aḥmad began to chant a prayer.

Something else *had* happened.

At the same time as Aḥmad was enjoying his Naw-Rúz, in another part of Persia there was a young man, very gentle and good, called the Báb, Whom God had sent to the world to make people’s hearts ready for the Coming of Bahá’u’lláh. It was the very first Naw-Rúz after the Báb had told people His wonderful Message.



The Báb was also having a happy time with his family. There were a few friends with him on that Day who knew about God's New Message. Later they travelled all over Persia telling everyone about it and when Aḥmad heard he was very happy and knew that God had answered his prayer.

There is something very special about the Bahá'í Naw-Rúz. We remember about everything being new on that Day and we remember something else. The Báb said that God had chosen every Naw-Rúz as His Very Own Day. That Naw-Rúz when Aḥmad was a little boy was God's Day. This Naw-Rúz is God's Day. Every Naw-Rúz is God's Day. And it is one of the happiest Days of the year.



*“Glad Tidings!
For everlasting life is here!
O ye that sleep, awake!
O ye heedless ones, learn wisdom!
O blind, receive your sight!
O deaf, hear!
O dumb, speak!
O dead, arise!
Be happy!
Be happy!
Be full of joy!”*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



Birth of the Báb

20th OCTOBER 1819

Long, long ago, when there were no cars or aeroplanes or television, and people in one country did not know about people living in other lands, God sent His Messengers to the world.

One Messenger of God was born in India and He was called Krishna. Krishna told the people how to live good and happy lives and find peace within themselves. He also gave them a Promise from God—that in the future a great and glorious Day would come. And the people did not forget this Promise but told their children, who told their children, who told *their* children, so that although hundreds of years passed by the people still remembered.



In the land of Palestine God sent another Messenger, Who was called Jesus. Jesus told the people that they must love and forgive each other. He also said that He could tell them many more things but they would not be able to understand them now and in the future a wonderful One from God would explain everything to them. The people listened to what Jesus said and did not forget that Promise.

In another land called Arabia, Muḥammad was born. God sent Him to tell the people an important message how a whole country could live together without fighting and how we must always be fair to each other. Muḥammad too gave that same Promise from God, that something especially wonderful would happen one day, and He told of two Great Ones Who were to come.

There were other Messengers of God Who came to other parts of the world and they all gave the same Promise.

Now everyone knew about the Promise and was waiting to see what would happen. Then one day about a hundred and fifty years ago, some of them became very excited because they felt that the long-awaited Day was very, very near.

Strange things began to happen. One day countless meteors began shooting across the sky looking just like brightly-coloured snowflakes. Some people were frightened, but others knew it was a sign from God. Men began to discover things they had never understood before—like how to send messages through the air from one town to another.

In America some people sold their houses and went up on top of a high hill because they thought the Great One promised by God would come down out of the sky.

In Germany people left their homes and sailed to Haifa because they knew that that was where they would find the Promised One.

In Persia many people began to search, travelling throughout the land asking questions and praying to God to guide them.

There were two holy men in Persia who were like stars to the other people. A star shines at night and lights up the sky and this is how Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim were—they guided the people who did not understand. They told them that they must watch and not miss knowing the Promised One when He came, and explained many signs to make it easier for them. Some of the people listened, but most were too proud and turned away.

In the year 1819 a sad thing happened to Shaykh Aḥmad: his son died and those who loved him came to say how sorry they were. But Shaykh Aḥmad told his friends not to be sad. He said this because he knew that God had given the world the precious gift of a baby boy called the Báb Who was the Promised One everyone had been waiting for.

The Báb was born in the town of Shiráz in Persia. Cool, green trees shade the wide streets and streams of clear water bubble through the town. The air is sweet with the scent of roses and all



night long nightingales sing. Many poems have been written about Shiráz and the people who live there are happy and friendly.

The mother and father of the Báb came from the family of Muḥammad and everyone liked and respected them because of the good lives they led. When the Báb was still a little boy His father died so His uncle looked after Him.

When He was about six or seven years old the Báb was sent to school and one day the teacher asked Him to read the words at the beginning of the Holy Book of Muḥammad, which is called the Qur'án. The Báb said please could the teacher explain what the words meant first because He did not want to say them unless He understood their meaning. The teachers pretended that he did not know, so the Báb said He would explain them: and He did, so beautifully that the teacher was astonished. Not only did the Báb explain what the words meant but He did it better than any grown-up could have done.

The teacher took the Báb back to His uncle and told him to take great care of Him for His knowledge came from God and was like the knowledge of the Promised One. At first His uncle did not understand and thought the Báb had been naughty at school by talking too much, but he soon realised how very special His nephew was.

Everyone who met the Báb marvelled at the wise things He said and loved Him because He was always very fair, kind and gentle.

Part of the wonderful Promise of God had come true with the Coming of the Báb, and the rest of that Promise came true with the Coming of Bahá'u'lláh. And that is another story.



*“I am the Lamp
which the Finger of God
hath lit . . .”*

The Báb



Declaration of the Báb

23rd MAY 1844

Once upon a time, about a hundred and fifty years ago, two holy men lived in Persia. Their names were Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim. They were the first people in the world to know When the Promised One from God would come. But before the other people could know, their hearts had to be made ready. If we plant a beautiful flower we do not put it among weeds and stones: first we clear the ground of rubbish and make it as nice as possible, then we plant the flower. In the same way if the minds and hearts of people are full of wrong thoughts and feelings, then these have to be got rid of before the love of God can be planted there. This was the job God had given these two holy men to do.

For forty years Shaykh Aḥmad made the hearts of the people ready, and after him Siyyid Kázim carried on this important work.

One day a shepherd had a dream. In the dream God told him that Siyyid Kázim would soon die and then the Promised One would be found. When he was told about this dream Siyyid Kázim became very happy and told his disciples not to give up their search for the Promised One when he died, but to travel far and wide and ask God to guide them.

One of the disciples of Siyyid Kázim was a man called Mullá Ḥusayn. He was away in another town when his teacher, Siyyid Kázim, died. As soon as Mullá Ḥusayn returned he asked the other disciples what their master's last words had been. They told him everything that had happened and when he heard that Siyyid Kázim had told them to leave their homes and search for the Promised One, Mullá Ḥusayn was very surprised to find they had not gone. He said they should obey at once what Siyyid Kázim had told them to do. But they began making excuses and Mullá Ḥusayn knew it was no use waiting for them. With his brother and nephew he went to a mosque to pray and for forty days fasted and prayed to God for guidance.



When the forty days were over Mullá Ḥusayn travelled to a town called Búshíhr, where He felt very close to God. This was because the Promised One had often been there and His prayers had left a wonderful feeling in the town. Siyyid Kázim had said if the disciples asked God to guide them He would, and this is what happened to Mullá Ḥusayn—God led him first to Búshíhr and then on to Shíráz.

He arrived at the gate to the city of Shíráz and told his nephew and brother, who had come with him on his search, to go to a certain mosque where he would join them later.

Mullá Ḥusayn did not go into the town but stayed outside the gate. Then, a few hours before the sun went down behind the distant hills, he saw a Young Man with a face which seemed to be shining. He came towards Mullá Ḥusayn, gave him a loving hug as though He had known him all his life and invited him back to His house.

Mullá Ḥusayn was at first very surprised and not quite sure what was happening. They came to the door of the Young Man's house and as he went in, Mullá Ḥusayn felt a deep joy inside himself which he could not explain.

Although he did not know it, Mullá Ḥusayn had found the Báb. The Báb brought some water so Mullá Ḥusayn could wash after his long and dusty journey, and gave him a delicious drink to refresh him. Then He made some tea. After this Mullá Ḥusayn got up to go, saying he had told his friends he would join them at the mosque, but the Báb politely asked him not to leave, saying that God wanted him to stay. So Mullá Ḥusayn stayed and he and the Báb stood to say their evening prayers. As he prayed, Mullá Ḥusayn again asked God to help him find the Promised One.

After they had prayed, the Báb asked Mullá Ḥusayn to repeat all the advice Siyyid Kázim had given him, and this Mullá Ḥusayn did. He told how Siyyid Kázim had said the Promised One would come from the Family of Muḥammad, how He would be between twenty and thirty years old, how His knowledge would not come from books and teachers but from God, how He would be of medium height (that is, not very tall nor very short) and how He would not smoke or have anything wrong with Him.

There was a silence. Then the Báb said: "Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!" Mullá Ḥusayn still did not understand! But he suddenly became afraid in case he had been rude and wondered whether he should ask this Young Man to explain a very difficult part of the Holy Book of Muḥammad, which is called the Qur'án, which even Siyyid Kázim had not been able to explain. Siyyid Kázim had said that the Promised One would explain it without even being asked. Before Mullá Ḥusayn had a chance to ask his question the Báb began to answer it just as Siyyid Kázim had said He would!

As the Báb explained what the words meant Mullá Ḥusayn knew that He was indeed the Promised One. When the Báb finished Mullá Ḥusayn rose to leave, but the Báb smiled, telling him to wait until he was calmer, for poor Mullá Ḥusayn was so full of excitement, happiness and wonder that for a time he did not know what he was doing!

The sun disappeared behind the roof tops of the town and the people slept. But not Mullá Ḥusayn. He spent the whole night listening to the sweet voice of the Báb chanting the new teachings from God. The Báb gave Mullá Ḥusayn a new name. He said: "O thou who art the first to believe in Me! Verily I say, I am the Báb, the Gate of God, and thou art the Bábu'l-Báb, the gate of that Gate."

The sun rose high in the clear Persian sky, and the people in the

town of Shiráz woke up. They awoke to a new day which was the beginning of the exciting story of the Báb and His followers.

Eighteen pure-hearted people found the Báb without anyone telling them where He was. And after those first eighteen, thousands more came to love and obey Him.

The Báb told of another Messenger of God Who would soon come—One Whose Teachings would be even greater and more wonderful than His. The name “Báb” means the Gate through which we pass to the beautiful garden of the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.



*“The Báb, the Exalted One,
is the Morn of Truth,
the splendour of Whose light
shineth throughout all regions.
He is also the Harbinger
of the Most Great Light.”*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



Martyrdom of the Báb

9th JULY 1850

High up among the black mountains in the north of Persia is a castle. Inside the castle the Báb was kept a prisoner. It was so cold that when the Báb washed His face the water froze in icy drops on His skin, and each long night was spent in darkness for there was no lamp.

The Báb had not done anything wrong and He was loved by everyone who met Him. Everyone, that is, except some bad people in the land who had taken Him so far away from His friends and followers and thought: “Now everyone will forget about this Báb Who says He comes from God.” But, of course, they didn’t.

Not only did His followers travel hundreds of miles to see Him but the mountain people too felt His great love, which was like a light shining out from that dark prison making their hearts sing with happiness. Before going to work each morning they would walk to the foot of the mountain and, turning their faces towards the prison, praise the Báb and ask for His blessing. Everyone was talking about the Báb, telling of the miracles they had seen and the strange dreams they had had, and how the Light of God shone from Him making them feel happy and strong when they were near Him.

At first the prison guard was not kind to the Báb, but in the end he, too, came to love Him and allow the believers to visit Him. One of these believers was a secretary who used to write down the wonderful teachings of the Báb. One day the Báb asked this secretary to read to Him the story of a holy man called Imám Ḥusayn. Imám Ḥusayn had loved Muḥammad very much and was very close to God, but the people had not understood how great he was, and so they killed him. As the secretary read the sad story the tears poured down the face of the Báb and He knew that before long the same thing would happen to Him.

One day the Báb was taken to a nearby town called Tabriz. There the important people of the town asked Him: “Who do you

claim to be?" The Báb answered: "I am, I am, I am the Promised One." Although they were waiting for the Promised One to come, for Muḥammad had told them He would, they did not want to believe it and sent Him back to the prison in the mountains.

In Tabríz was another prisoner. He was a boy called Anís. He dearly loved the Báb and wished to be with Him, but his step-father thought he had gone mad and locked him up in a room of the house. Anís wept bitterly and could not be calmed. He began to pray and the Báb came to him in a dream, smiling into his eyes and saying that He had chosen Anís to be with Him when He was martyred. To be martyred is a wonderful thing—it means to be killed because you believe in God and in the next world you are more happy than you have ever been in your life. When he heard this Anís was filled with joy and peace and did not cry any more.

Before long an order came from the government saying that the Báb (and anyone who believed in Him) was to be killed. He was again taken from His prison and brought to Tabríz. As He was being led through the crowded streets a young, bare-footed boy rushed forward and fell at His feet. It was Anís. He too was taken prisoner and with three others was locked in a cell with the Báb.

That night the Báb was very happy. He knew that before long He would be in Heaven, which is so wonderful that we call it the Abhá Kingdom, which means the World of God, the Most Glorious. The Báb looked gently at the few believers who were with Him and said He wished He could be killed by a friend not an enemy. The friends loved the Báb and so of course did not want to kill Him, but one of them, Anís, loved Him so completely that he was willing to do anything the Báb wanted him to do, however hard it was, and so he said that he would do it. Now the Báb's question had been a test to see who was the most pure and brave. Anís had passed the test and the Báb chose him to be martyred with Him the next day, just as He had promised in the dream. When you love someone very much you want to be with him all the time and that is why Anís did not mind being killed if it meant he could be with the Báb. His stepfather had kept him away from the Báb in this world, but his reward was to be with Him for ever in the next world.

Early next morning the Báb was talking to His secretary when the chief-attendant came to take Him to be shot. He refused to let the Báb finish His conversation, even though the Báb told him that



nothing on earth could stop Him finishing What He wanted to say to His secretary.

The leader of the regiment of soldiers, Sám Khán, who had been ordered to shoot the Báb, was very worried. He respected the Báb and did not want to harm Him. He told the Báb how worried he was, and the Báb told Sám Khán that if he was sincere, then God would make something happen so that he would not have to kill Him.

Ten thousand people were waiting in the square. The Báb and the boy were tied to a nail in the wall. Seven hundred and fifty soldiers pointed their guns at them. Sám Khán shouted: "Fire!" Then, as the smoke from the guns cleared away everyone gasped in amazement. The Báb had vanished! And Anís was standing unhurt near the wall.

The guards rushed about looking for the Báb—and found Him back in the cell finishing His conversation with His secretary! The Báb smiled and said: "I have finished My conversation." He then told them that they could now kill Him as they had been ordered to do.

When they saw and heard these things the chief-attendant knew that the Báb must be from God, and Sâm Khán knew that God had indeed made something happen so that he would not have to shoot the Báb.

Another regiment was ordered to fire at the Báb. Again He and the young boy were tied to the nail. The Báb told the watching people: "The day will come when you will have recognised Me; that day I shall have ceased to be with you." Everyone stopped talking. It was very quiet. The soldiers raised their guns and the Báb and the boy were shot. At that moment a fierce gale roared through the town and the day became as black as night.

The people went back to their houses. They did not realise what a dreadful thing they had done to the gentle Messenger of God called the Báb.

After many years the Báb was buried on Mount Carmel. One day you will go on pilgrimage to Haifa and see the beautiful Shrine of the Báb which is full of happiness, power and peace. The golden dome shines across the sea to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Bahjí. Bahá'u'lláh, was the Great Manifestation of God the Báb had promised would come after Him.



*"I am the Countenance of God
Whose Splendour can never be obscured,
the light of God Whose radiance
can never fade . . ."*

The Báb



Birth of Bahá'u'lláh

12th NOVEMBER 1817

In the beginning of time God made a promise. He said that He would never leave us alone but would always help and guide us. God kept this promise and from time to time sent His Messengers to the world. Moses came and Krishna; Jesus, Buddha and Muḥammad. These Holy Messengers of God also gave a promise— That one day two Great Ones would come to make the whole world a wonderful place to live in.

About a hundred and fifty years ago in every country people were waiting for these two Promised Ones. Many people had dreams about the wondrous Day that was soon to come. The trouble was that most of them did not understand *how* it would happen. They should have known because God always sends His Messengers in the same way: like everyone else, They are born into the world as little babies.

However, although the Messengers of God are born into the world just like you and me, They are very, very special because They shine with the Light of God. And when we love and obey Them it is the same as loving and obeying God.

Some people know when a Messenger of God is born even without hearing about it, although most of us do not know until we are told. There were some holy men in Persia who knew when the Promised Ones were born.

The Names of the Promised Ones were the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. The story of the birth of the Báb is in another part of the book, so this story is about Bahá'u'lláh.

In the land of Persia was a rich king who lived in a fine palace. Many important people worked for the king, and they, too, were rich and lived in grand houses. One of these important people was a good man who, although he had a lot of money, was generous to the poor people and there was much happiness among the people who lived in his villages and worked on his farms.



Early one morning, on 12th November 1817, a baby boy was born to this good man and his wife.

At that very moment, in another part of Persia, a man called Hájí Haşan was praying. The sun was just beginning to climb into the sky when he bowed down to the ground saying over and over again: "God is Most Great! God is Most Great! God is Most Great!" Then he turned and said to a young man who was watching him that at that very hour the Light of the Promised One was shining upon the world. Bahá'u'lláh had been born!

At the same time Shaykh Aḥmad was in the town of Tīhrán where Bahá'u'lláh was born. Shaykh Aḥmad was a holy man sent by God to prepare the hearts and minds of the people so they would know the Promised One when He came. It was because of the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad that Hájí Haşan had known.

Shaykh Aḥmad also knew that Bahá'u'lláh had been born and he prayed that one day everyone in the world would find this hidden Treasure of God. Bahá'u'lláh is indeed a Treasure, more precious than gold because when people turn to Him they become rich with goodness, love, happiness and peace. And however much gold you have you can never buy those things.

The good man and his wife loved their baby Boy very much. They did not know that their Son was the Promised One, but they knew that there was something very wonderful about Him. His father dreamed that he saw Bahá'u'lláh swimming in a huge ocean. His body shone like a light upon the waters and His long black hair floated around His head. Many fish were attracted by the light shining from Him, and they gathered round His head holding only each hair. But although there were so many, Bahá'u'lláh was able to swim quite freely wherever He wished.

Bahá'u'lláh's father asked a wise man to tell him the meaning of this dream and he was told that the sea was this world and Bahá'u'lláh would become like a King of the whole world, loved and obeyed by all people, even though at first many would try to stop Him.

As Bahá'u'lláh grew older it was plain for everyone to see that He knew things no one else knew. He did not go to school but understood more than any teacher. He was very clever and wise. One day the king of Persia asked Bahá'u'lláh's father for a lot of money which he could not pay. Even though he was only seven years old, Bahá'u'lláh went to the king and explained so well how his father

could not afford to pay so much that the king realised that he had been unfair.

Although He was brought up surrounded with fine things and important people, Bahá'u'lláh preferred to spend His time in the woods and countryside, praying to God and helping the poor.

And so Bahá'u'lláh quietly grew up, only a very few people knowing that He was the Glory of God on earth, until the day came when it was time for everyone to know.



*“I bear witness that he who
hath known Thee hath known God, and
he who hath attained unto Thy presence
hath attained unto the presence of God.
Great, therefore, is the blessedness
of him who hath believed in Thee . . .”*

*(From Tablet of Visitation of
Bahá'u'lláh)*



First Day of Ridván

21st APRIL 1863

In the early morning the sun rises into the sky and the dark earth becomes light once more. Flowers open their petals, birds sing and the world begins to wake up.

It was like that when the Báb came. He was like the light of the sun after a long dark night. People's hearts and minds had been asleep and the teachings of the Báb woke them up. Their hearts became filled with love and their minds with great discoveries as they began to understand some of the mysteries of God.

During the morning the sun rises higher and higher in the sky, until by noon the day is full of light. This was like the Coming of Bahá'u'lláh. The Báb said that Bahá'u'lláh was the Glory of God and His Teachings would be even more wonderful than the ones He had given.

But if a room is dusty we do not like the sun to shine too brightly to show it up, and those men whose minds and hearts were full of wrong thoughts and feelings did not like the Light of God shining so brightly and showing how bad they were, so they killed the Báb and shut Bahá'u'lláh in a dark prison.

It was while Bahá'u'lláh was in that prison that God told Him that He was the One the Báb had promised would come. From that moment Bahá'u'lláh became filled with the knowledge of God.

Bahá'u'lláh was kept in that prison for four months and He became so ill that everyone thought He would soon die, so they took the chains from His neck and feet and sent Him away to another land. With His wife and two small children Bahá'u'lláh began the difficult journey, on horseback and in the middle of winter, to the town of Baghdád in the land of 'Irâq.

Ten years passed by, but Bahá'u'lláh had not yet told anyone that He was the Manifestation of God the Báb had promised would come. However, although they had not been told how great Bahá'u'lláh was, everyone loved Him and wanted to be near Him.



The richest princes and the poorest beggars would go to His House and people travelled for hundreds of miles to see Him. One important man went to Bahá'u'lláh's House early every morning to sweep the dust from the pavement and steps outside the door. Even people who had been enemies came to Him for advice, and the poor were so happy when they were with Bahá'u'lláh that they forgot they were hungry and sad. Many a night no one slept, but spent the time chanting the beautiful prayers Bahá'u'lláh had written.

The years passed happily by, but one day Bahá'u'lláh received a letter from the governor saying that He must leave Baghdád and go to another town called Constantinople. The king of Persia did not like so many people loving Bahá'u'lláh and wanted Him to be sent even farther away.

No one could sleep that night. But this time it was not because they were happy, but because they were very sad.

As Bahá'u'lláh was about to leave His House a little boy fell at His feet, held on to His robe and cried, and would not let Him go. Everyone began to cry when they saw this and Bahá'u'lláh's heart was full of love and sadness.

Bahá'u'lláh and His loved ones walked towards a river and there Bahá'u'lláh left them. He went across the river to spend twelve days in a beautiful garden before He finally left Baghdád. It was in this Garden that Bahá'u'lláh openly said that He was the Promised One.

The name of this Garden was "Riḍván" which means paradise. And the first day Bahá'u'lláh went there is called the First Day of Riḍván—the First Day of Paradise.



*"The Best-Beloved is come . . .
Happy is the man
that turneth unto Him."*

Bahá'u'lláh



Ninth Day of Riḍván

29th APRIL 1863

Bahá'u'lláh spent twelve days in the Riḍván Garden, and it was here that He first told the friends that He was the Manifestation of God Who had been promised by Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muḥammad and the Báb. This was such an important time that Bahá'u'lláh called it the “King of Festivals” and the “Festival of God”. And He said that at that moment God forgave everyone all the wrong things they had ever done. It was as though the world had just been born again and everything was good once more.



The Riḍván Garden was full of roses, and early each morning the gardeners would pick them and put them in a pile inside Bahá'u'lláh's tent. The friends would gather to drink their morning tea in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, and there were so many roses they could not see each other across the pile. When they had finished Bahá'u'lláh would give each one some roses to give to the other friends in the city of Baghdád.

Each day people came from the city to see Bahá'u'lláh, and from morning until evening He would talk with them. Each night He walked in the garden among the flowers while the birds sang in the trees above. Bahá'u'lláh said that these nightingales stayed awake and sang all night because they loved the roses in the garden. Then He said how strange it was that people still slept even though God was near to them.

Sometimes people say they love God and then do not listen when He tells them something wonderful. However, there are some who do hear and they become new people, knowing many things they never knew before and being filled with a happiness which nobody can take away. We have this happiness when we love, and listen to, Bahá'u'lláh.

While Bahá'u'lláh was in the Garden of Riḍván the Holy Family were busy packing their belongings because they were all being sent away from Baghdád to the town of Constantinople. When they were ready they joined Bahá'u'lláh on the Ninth Day of Riḍván—the Ninth Day of Paradise.



*“The Promised One hath
appeared in this glorified Station,
whereat all beings, both seen and
unseen, have rejoiced. . . . Verily,
to meet Him is better for you than
all that whereon the sun shineth,
could ye but know it.”*

Bahá'u'lláh

Twelfth Day of Riḍván

2nd MAY 1863

Bahá'u'lláh was sent away from Baghdád a prisoner, yet people were treating Him as though He were a King! And of course He was—the King of the whole world. But those who were sending Him away did not know that—they did not understand how wonderful Bahá'u'lláh was and that God had sent Him to make the world a good and happy place to live in.

Most people in Baghdád did not want Bahá'u'lláh to go, and many cried that day. When Bahá'u'lláh left the Garden of Riḍván they gave Him a beautiful horse to ride on, and people crowded round holding on to the stirrups and even kissing the horse's hoofs. Many threw themselves down in front of the horse and did not mind if they were hurt. They just could not bear the thought of Bahá'u'lláh leaving them. Even the governor of the town, who had been ordered to send Bahá'u'lláh away, was sorry and did not really want to do it.

As Bahá'u'lláh with His Family and twenty-six of the Bahá'ís travelled along, people came out of their houses to greet them, waving banners and beating drums, and led the way through the towns where men, women and children crowded on to roof-tops and into streets waiting to see Bahá'u'lláh and His followers.

For one hundred and ten days they travelled through meadows, woods and valleys, then across the sea to Constantinople.

Bahá'u'lláh had first told the friends that He was the Promised One while He was in the Garden of Riḍván, and it was while He was in Constantinople that He first told a king. This was the king of Turkey to whose country Bahá'u'lláh had now been sent. This king was not good, for he did many things that were cruel and unfair.



After only four months this king sent Bahá'u'lláh away from Constantinople. It was a morning in December, and the people wept as they waved goodbye to the Holy Family setting out on donkeys and in wagons on such a cold journey. Many animals had died because of the cold, and when the Holy Family wanted water to drink they had to light fires to melt the ice.

After twelve days they arrived in another town, which was called Adrianople. It was here that Bahá'u'lláh wrote to all the kings of the world telling them about the wonderful new Message from God. But they did not want to listen, so God punished them by taking away their power, and nobody took any notice of them any more.

After this the story of Bahá'u'lláh became very sad again, for He was put in prison for many years. However, during the Twelve Days of Riḍván we remember what a happy time it was and how Bahá'u'lláh said it was the Most Great Festival that has ever happened. And how from that time the old world became a new world because the Bahá'í Faith had been born.

The day that Bahá'u'lláh left the Garden of Riḍván in Baghdád is called the Twelfth Day of Riḍván—the Twelfth Day of Paradise.



*“Verily I say, this is the
Day in which mankind can behold
the Face, and hear the Voice, of
the Promised One. The Call of
God hath been raised, and the light
of His Countenance hath been lifted
up upon men.”*

Bahá'u'lláh



Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh

29th MAY 1892

When Bahá'u'lláh was in the Garden of Riḍván in Baghdád the nightingales sang all night long of their love for the sweet-smelling roses. Bahá'u'lláh spent His life telling of His love for God—and of God's great love for man. And like the nightingales, He sang during a time of darkness, for the Song of Bahá'u'lláh was sung while He was in prison.

At one time He was put in an underground cell in Tīhrán, where He was chained in the darkness for four long months. Yet it was here that the Spirit of God came to Bahá'u'lláh and gave Him the knowledge of all things, and told Him that He was the Promised One Who would bring justice and unity to the world.

Another time He was made to stay in a small damp house in Adrianople where there were rats, and the enemies of the Faith of God caused trouble because they were jealous of Bahá'u'lláh and they tried to poison Him. It was in this town that Bahá'u'lláh wrote a Tablet addressed to the kings of the world telling them of the New Message from God.

Finally, Bahá'u'lláh was sent to the prison-city of 'Akká, where He was shut behind barred windows and for many years did not see any green grass, or flower, or leaf of a tree. At first there was no clean water to drink nor good food to eat, and many of the friends fell ill. Here the enemies of God made more trouble, and even a few of the believers were disobedient, which made Bahá'u'lláh very sad. It was in this prison that the dearly loved youngest son of Bahá'u'lláh died.

And yet this prison Bahá'u'lláh called “the Heaven of Heavens”, for it was in 'Akká that He finished writing to the kings and rulers and peoples of the world. Although He was still a prisoner the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh could be heard in many lands.

At this time Bahá'u'lláh also wrote His Most Holy Book of Laws (called the Kitáb-i-Aqdas) telling all the things Bahá'ís must and must not do.

Gradually the people of 'Akká came to respect Bahá'u'lláh. Because of His great kindness and love their hearts began to change and after nine years He was able to leave the city and live outside in the countryside.

Pilgrims from far away travelled to see Him, and a learned man called Professor Browne from England wrote about his meeting with Bahá'u'lláh: "The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul. . . ." Professor Browne was not a Bahá'í, but he found himself bowing down as the Power of God shone from Bahá'u'lláh.

A few days before He passed away from this world Bahá'u'lláh asked His family and all the believers to come to His room and He lovingly told them: "I am well pleased with you all." They had suffered very much because they loved Bahá'u'lláh, for they had been shut in cold prisons and been made fun of by the townspeople. But they did not mind these things happening to them as long as they were with Bahá'u'lláh. To be near to Bahá'u'lláh was the same as being near to God.



A few days later Bahá'u'lláh's Work on earth ended. He had given the world all the teachings it needed to make it a happy and wonderful place to live in until the next Messenger of God comes in the future.

The Shrine where Bahá'u'lláh is buried is outside the prison-city of 'Akká. The fields stretch far away to the hills in the distance and the trees stretch high into the sky towards the sun. And the air is full of love.

When everyone listens to the beautiful Song of Bahá'u'lláh they will love one another and the world will become one home.



*"Incline your ears to the
sweet melody of this Prisoner.
Arise, and lift up your voices,
that haply they that are fast
asleep may be awakened."*

Bahá'u'lláh





There are two more Bahá'í Holy Days. On these two days we do not have a holiday, but we do remember something very important. These Holy Days are about 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The Day of the Covenant

26th NOVEMBER

The Agreement

It was the half-light before morning and the world slept. Grey clouds crept across the sky and rain fell like a whisper on the earth. Trees and flowers, bushes and grass drank the rain as it reached their roots, and grew.

Suddenly the shower stopped and the light of the sun filled the sky and gently touched the ground. The trees and flowers, bushes and grass felt the sun as it warmed their leaves, and again they grew.

It is like an agreement between the earth and the sky. When the rain falls and the sun shines everything on earth is able to live. But if plants were to hide in some dark place where the rain does not fall and the sun cannot shine, then these would wither and die.

In the beginning, before there was any living thing, God loved us and so He gave us life. And He made an agreement: that He would never leave us alone but would always send Messengers of God to guide us. God kept this promise and because men listened to the wonderful teachings of the Messengers of God their hearts grew kind and their minds more wise. Although there were always some who would not listen—like plants trying to grow in the dark.

Each time the Messengers of God came They made an agreement with their followers: that one day a Great One would come Whose teachings would make all the people in the world love one another, and there would be no more war.

The time came and God sent Bahá'u'lláh to live among men and give the wonderful teachings of the New Day. Those who listened became new people, loving one another and understanding many things they never understood before. But those who turned away are like the plants in the darkness, and they will never know the

truth unless they come out into the sunshine of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh made an agreement with the Bahá'ís: He said if we turn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Bahá'í Faith will never be divided and we will always know the right thing to do. This is because just as the Light of God shines in Bahá'u'lláh so the Light of Bahá'u'lláh shines in 'Abdu'l-Bahá.



During the night of 22nd May 1844, the same night as the Báb first told anyone that He was the Promised One, a baby boy was born. His name was 'Abbás and later He was called 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the eldest Son of Bahá'u'lláh.

For a few days the Holy Family—Bahá'u'lláh, His wife and children—lived peacefully in a lovely house in the country. 'Abdu'l-Bahá played with His little brother and sister and loved to meet the followers of the Báb who often came to their house.

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was six years old the Báb was killed, and when He was eight His Father, Bahá'u'lláh, was suddenly taken away and put in prison. He had been telling the people about the Báb, and the religious leaders did not like this, and as soon as they could find an excuse they began to imprison and kill all the Bábís.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was heartbroken. His Beloved Father was chained in an underground cell while His Family hid in a small house near the prison. One day 'Abdu'l-Bahá was taken to see Bahá'u'lláh while the prisoners were being allowed to walk for a few minutes in the fresh air before being taken back down again into the dungeon. He could not bear to see His Father suffer so.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Later, when Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy Family were sent away from Persia and living in Baghdád, everyone could see the great love that was between Bahá'u'lláh and His Son. One day Bahá'u'lláh went into the mountains to be alone with God. Two years passed by and there was no news of Him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá prayed all night that His Father might come back and soon Bahá'u'lláh returned.

From Baghdád They went to another town, and as They travelled through woods and valleys 'Abdu'l-Bahá would walk beside Bahá'u'lláh's horse while one of the friends chanted poems and prayers. As evening came He would go ahead to find a comfortable place for everyone to spend the night and did not rest until He had found enough food for everyone to eat.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was always thinking of the comfort of other people and never of Himself.

Eventually the Holy Family and the many believers who were with Them arrived in Haifa, where they stayed a few hours before sailing across the bay to the prison-city of 'Akká. They were all crowded on to a small open boat and the sun was very hot. When they arrived at 'Akká the women and children were so weak they could no longer walk and 'Abdu'l-Bahá carried them ashore. In the prison the water and food were bad and everyone became sick and again it was 'Abdu'l-Bahá Who nursed them until He, too, fell ill.

As the years passed by the prison guards came to trust 'Abdu'l-Bahá and allowed Him to go out of the city gates. One of the first things He did was to make a beautiful garden for Bahá'u'lláh on an island in the middle of a river. Bahá'ís from Persia would walk hundreds of miles to see Bahá'u'lláh and they would bring flowers to plant in the garden. Bahá'u'lláh called it "Riḍván", which means "Paradise".

After this 'Abdu'l-Bahá was able to rent a large house in the open countryside where Bahá'u'lláh lived for two years before moving to an even bigger house, which was called the Mansion of Bahjí. Bahá'u'lláh spent the rest of His life in the Mansion of Bahjí, and the Shrine where He is buried is in the beautiful gardens which surround it.

Bahá'u'lláh's days and nights were spent in Writing the New Teachings from God, while 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued to live in the town of 'Akká, looking after the pilgrims who had often walked all the way from their own countries to see Bahá'u'lláh. 'Abdu'l-Bahá



also looked after the poor—giving them food and sometimes a little money, and nursing them when they were ill and could not afford a doctor.

Bahá'u'lláh called 'Abdu'l-Bahá "The apple of Mine eye", which means that He loved Him very, very much, and He became so happy when 'Abdu'l-Bahá walked from 'Akká to the Mansion of Bahjí to be with His beloved Father. 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not live in the Mansion because His brothers were jealous of Him and He did not want to make them more envious. It must have been very sad for 'Abdu'l-Bahá not to be with Bahá'u'lláh all the time.

When Bahá'u'lláh's Soul left this world to return to God in the Abhá Kingdom He left a Will saying that all the Bahá'ís must turn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá for guidance.

Bahá'u'lláh called 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"The Centre of the Covenant" because He understood all the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and to obey 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the same as obeying Bahá'u'lláh;

"The Mystery of God" because there has never been anyone quite like 'Abdu'l-Bahá before and no one can understand completely how wonderful He is;

"The Most Great Branch" because He was the most important member of the Family of Bahá'u'lláh, and like a strong and mighty Branch growing from the Tree of the Religion of God;

and "The Master" because He taught us how to be true Bahá'ís. 'Abdu'l-Bahá called Himself "'Abdu'l-Bahá" which means "Servant of Bahá'u'lláh".



*"Render thanks unto God,
O people, for His appearance;
for verily He is the most
great Favour unto you,
the most perfect bounty upon you . . .
Whoso turneth towards Him
hath turned towards God . . ."*

Bahá'u'lláh



Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

28th NOVEMBER 1921

God never stops giving. He gave us the sun and the earth, the sky and the seas. He gives us souls which never die, and the Messengers of God to guide us.

The Messengers of God never stop giving. They give Themselves to God—and the knowledge of God to us.

Bahá'u'lláh also gave us 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

'Abdu'l-Bahá never stopped giving. Every minute of His life He obeyed Bahá'u'lláh, and every minute of His life He gave to other people.

At the dawn of every day 'Abdu'l-Bahá would rise after resting for only three or four hours. After He had prayed to God He would go out to help the poor. Sometimes He would give them food or advice, and sometimes warm clothes to wear in winter. Sometimes they had been badly treated and 'Abdu'l-Bahá would make sure that they were treated fairly. Sometimes they were sick and 'Abdu'l-Bahá would get them a doctor and medicine or look after them Himself; and if they were unable to clean their houses because they were ill, then 'Abdu'l-Bahá would do that too. If some were lazy He would tell them where they could find work, and if someone was too shy to ask for His help 'Abdu'l-Bahá always knew without being told and He would send food to that person's house.

'Abdu'l-Bahá worked all day long. Late at night He would return home often having had nothing to eat since early morning, and then spend most of the night writing letters to the friends, and praying.

In 1908, after being a prisoner for forty years, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was freed. One of the first things He did was to place the holy Body of the Báb in a Shrine which He had built on Mount Carmel,

as Bahá'u'lláh had told Him to do, then He travelled to Egypt, England, Scotland, France, Hungary, Germany, America and Canada to give the wonderful Message of Bahá'u'lláh to people in other lands. Although by now He was very tired and sometimes very ill, He still gave His time and His love to anyone who needed it.

After His travels to all these countries 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to live in Haifa.

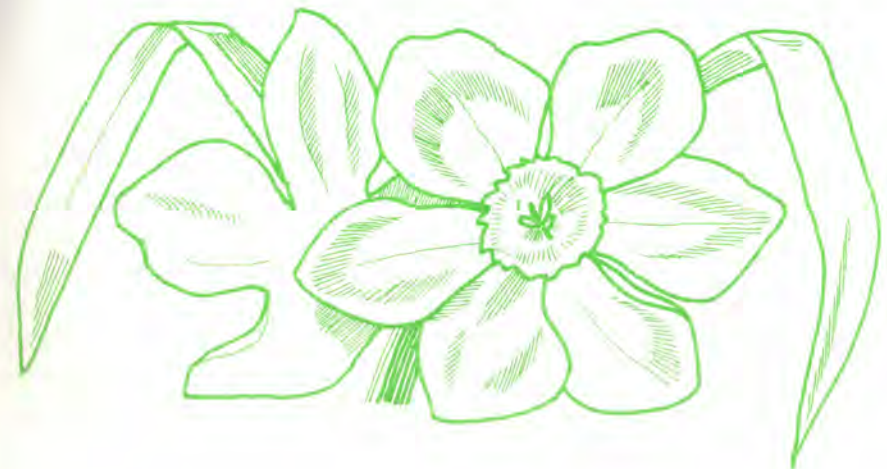
In the years that followed He continued to give to anyone who was in need. At one time He saved thousands of people from starving by storing grain when there was plenty and giving it to the people when there was a famine and no food.

He also wrote some very important letters called "Tablets of the Divine Plan" which told the Bahá'ís to travel to many countries and islands and teach the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

One day, while He was in the garden talking to one of the believers, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "I have finished my work, I can do nothing more, therefore must I leave it. . . ."

The next day He got up early in the morning feeling very cold and put on a fur-lined coat which had belonged to Bahá'u'lláh and which 'Abdu'l-Bahá loved very much. Then He lay down again upon His bed with the coat of Bahá'u'lláh placed over Him to keep Him warm.

As the day passed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá became very ill, but by midnight He felt better, and the next morning He was able to get up. In the afternoon all the friends went to the Shrine of the Báb to





pray, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá was unable to go. Afterwards, when the friends returned, they said how much He had been missed and 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "But I was there, though my body was absent, my spirit was there." Even though we cannot see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we know that He is with us all the time.

That night two of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's daughters stayed up to be with Him. He seemed quite well and very peaceful. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá had left this world and His Soul was with the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh in the Abhá Kingdom.

The coffin of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was lovingly carried up the mountain and laid to rest in the Shrine of the Báb, in a room next to the Holy Tomb of the Manifestation of God.

Ten thousand people came to the Funeral and they wept because 'Abdu'l-Bahá was no longer with them. Important people from the government, the mayor and religious leaders, all came to say how much they loved and respected 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The boy-scouts came and other children; the poor people came and the rich. Everyone felt they had lost their Friend because 'Abdu'l-Bahá had always been there to help them, and they felt they had lost their Father because He had looked after them all.

But the world had not really lost 'Abdu'l-Bahá because He had told the Bahá'ís that His spirit would always be with them even when His body was not. And when He left this world He gave us a beautiful gift.

This gift was His Grandson Shoghi Effendi, whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá said was the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, and whatever the Guardian told us to do was what God wanted us to do as well.

When the beloved Guardian died, the Universal House of Justice was elected to look after us all. Bahá'u'lláh wrote about the Universal House of Justice, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained how important it is for us to obey it, and the Guardian worked all of his life so that there were enough Bahá'ís in enough countries to elect it. Every five years the Bahá'ís of the world vote for nine men to be members of the Universal House of Justice, and God guides them so that they can always tell us the right thing to do.

When we think how much 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave us, how He helped us to understand the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, how He showed us how to be true Bahá'ís and how He made sure we were looked after when He left this world, we want so much to do something for Him. And there is something. He told us what we could do to make Him very happy:

“How my heart leaps with joy when I hear the friends love each other, always overlooking one another’s small mistakes; and that they are forgiving their enemies!”



*“Henceforward we shall
always be together, heart and
soul and spirit, pressing forward
in the work till all men
are gathered together under
the tent of the Kingdom, singing
the songs of peace.”*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

