

The Bahá'í Faith

Followers are called Bahá'ís

Founders: The Báb (the Gate), Herald and Founder Who foretold the Promised One, Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God)

When founded: the Báb declared Himself in 1844 to be the Predecessor of the Founder of a new cycle and Messenger Who would unite the entire world as we enter the age of the maturity of humanity leaving the prophetic cycle which began with Adam, stories about Whom are allegorical, because He also had been a Messenger of God.

The Báb was publicly martyred in Iran in 1850. Bahá'u'lláh was robbed of His possessions and sent into 40 years of exile with His family from Iran to Iraq, then to Turkey and finally the prison city of Akka in Syria (now Israel). During that period of exile in 1863 while in Iraq, Bahá'u'lláh announced that He was the promised Messenger. He fulfilled prophecy from the Judaism as well as the Gospel, the Qur'an, and the holy books of other Faiths, and, like all of the Prophets of those dispensations, despite years of suffering, revealed the Word of God.

Bahá'u'lláh was descended from Zoroaster, and from Abraham through his wife Katurah. He wrote the equivalent of one hundred volumes in Persian and Arabic of which one tenth have been translated into English. Many of His Writings have been translated into over 800 languages including *The Hidden Words*, *The Book of Certitude*, *Prayers and Meditations*, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, *The Book of Laws*, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, and *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*.

Beliefs about God:

There is one God, omnipotent, all-knowing, the Source of all creation, all powerful, loving and compassionate Who is the Source of all virtue and too great to be understood by the finite human mind. The purpose of life is to acquire the virtues – the attributes of God – and grow nearer to God in this world and the next. The soul will need these virtues – for example, justice, wisdom, loving-kindness, fair-mindedness, etc., in the life after this one in the material plane of existence.

God is transcendent and unknowable by the finite human mind, but God has provided Divine Teachers Who throughout history have revealed spiritual and social teachings appropriate for the capacity of human consciousness at that time.

God accomplishes this by sending to humanity a series of divine Educators—known as Manifestations of God—Who have given spiritual and social teachings for the advancement of civilization. These Manifestations have included Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, the latest of these Messengers. Each Manifestation has revealed the same spiritual teachings but different social teachings meant for a particular stage in human development. The teachings of the Bahá'í Faith proclaim the unity of God, of religion and humanity and are seen by Bahá'ís as a blueprint for uniting humankind in the one common faith. The Bahá'í Faith declares that each Manifestation presents a new stage in the revelation of God.

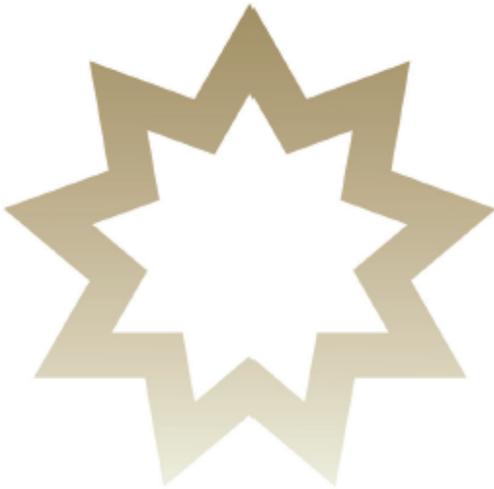
Knowing about God

We can't comprehend God directly, but can develop an understanding by studying and meditating on scripture, and praying sincerely for guidance, learning to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Special buildings

Seven Houses of Worship stand in or near Chicago, Illinois; Sydney, Australia; Kampala, Uganda; Frankfurt, Germany; Panama City, Panama; New Delhi, India; Santiago, Chile; and in Samoa. These are not Bahá'í gathering places but are places of worship for all people. Each structure has three tiers representing the world of God (topmost), the world of man (lowest), and the world of the Manifestations of God, which connects man to God. The Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and the Shrine of The Báb are in Haifa, Israel, where Bahá'u'lláh was last exiled and which is the destination for Bahá'í Pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime.

Main Symbol: A 9-pointed star



The Covenant

Central to the constitution of the Faith is the eternal Covenant of believers with God: God promises not to leave humanity alone without guidance, and humanity promises to believe in the Messenger Who brings God's guidance and to follow that guidance.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá "the Servant of God," as the sole Interpreter of the Holy Writings and the Exemplar of the Faith. Once released from the prison fortress of Akka, where Bahá'u'lláh had been exiled, 'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled through Europe and North America where he became renowned as a champion of social justice and an ambassador for international peace. He was knighted by Great Britain for His unselfish service to all people during World War I and praised by believers of all Faiths who attended His funeral in great numbers.

Shoghi Effendi

After His passing 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, as the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi spent his life setting the foundation for the Bahá'í Administrative Order, which is the organization designed by Bahá'u'lláh.

Administrative Organization

The Bahá'í Faith administrative order was designed by Baha'u'llah to give every Baha'i a say in the affairs in the Bahá'í community. It is organized with elected assemblies of nine members each at the local, national and international levels. Elections are held by secret ballot in prayerful silence with no discussion of names, no electioneering, and no campaigning. Bahá'ís are requested to vote for those persons having the greatest wisdom, sincerity, reliability and integrity.

At the local level, all Bahá'í believers 21 years and older who reside within the jurisdiction of the assembly are eligible for election to that body. Then, districts nationwide annually elect delegates to attend national conventions at which national assemblies are elected. National Assembly members then convene every five years in Haifa, Israel, where Bahá'u'lláh had last been exiled, to elect the members of the Universal House of Justice which is the highest administrative body.

Calendar

The calendar consists of 19 months of 19 days each, with the new year beginning on the Spring equinox, March 20 or 21, which totals 361 days. The remaining four days (5 in a leap year) floating between Feb. 25 and March 1, are called the Ayyám-i-Há, or the Days of God. These days of celebration and service before the last month of the Bahá'í year are devoted to spiritual preparation for the Fast, hospitality, charity and gift giving. They are celebrated during the four or five days.

19-Day Fast

In the last month of the Baha'i year, which begins with the vernal equinox (March 20th or 21st), Bahá'ís aged 15 years and older observe a 19-day Fast by abstaining from food and drink between sunrise and sunset. This period is a time of prayer, meditation and reflection to enable believers to detach from material and worldly things. Exemptions for fasting are made for the infirm, elderly, ill, pregnant women and others.

19-Day Feast

Bahá'í communities hold regular meetings, called 19-day Feasts, once every Bahá'í month, usually on the first evening of the first day of the Bahá'í month. Each Feast is organized into three parts: the first portion is for devotions, prayers and music. The second part for community consultation on administrative matters such as distribution of funds, and matters of interest to their locality in order to make recommendations to the local assembly. The third part of the Feast is for refreshments and socializing.

Consultation

Bahá'í affairs are conducted according to the principles of consultation established by Bahá'u'lláh. Consultation begins with identifying the spiritual principle in the situation and proceeds with the common goal of finding the truth for any given situation. Each participant is encouraged to contribute their ideas humbly to the group and to relinquish ownership of the idea so that it becomes the property of all. The goal is to arrive at a solution that everyone can agree with.

The Bahá'í Fund

Only those registered as members of the Bahá'í Faith can voluntarily contribute to the Fund. Although Fund goals are targeted to meet the needs of each particular community, money is not to be solicited. Instead, contributions are to be given voluntarily according to the dictates of each person's heart. This means that, depending on one's circumstances, a single penny can have the value of thousands of dollars.

Death

The body of the deceased must be treated with respect, prepared for burial and usually placed **into** a casket of fine wood. Bahá'u'lláh revealed special prayers for burials, and advises that we should be happy for the soul who is now progressing to the next world for which the physical life had only been a preparation. Bahá'u'lláh stated: "I have made death a messenger of joy unto thee. Wherefore dost thou grieve?" Life after death is continuous, not cyclical such as by reincarnation. Spiritual progress is without end and always according to the mercy and guidance of God.

Marriage

Bahá'ís have complete freedom to choose a husband or wife of the opposite sex. When a couple wishes to marry, both sets of their natural parents must then consent to the wedding. The purpose of obtaining parental consent is to strengthen bonds of family unity. The simple ceremony calls for the bride and groom to each recite, "We will all, verily, abide by the will of God" in the presence of two reliable witnesses approved by the Local Assembly.

Some Teachings

Avoid of all habit-forming mind-altering drugs, including alcohol, unless prescribed by a licensed medical physician.

Confine sexual activity to within the context of marriage between a man and a woman.

Work to eliminate every kind of prejudice including race, gender, religion, and nation.

Recite a daily obligatory prayer for which every adult has a choice of three specific prayers.

Create a universal auxiliary language to facilitate world communication

Remove unfair distribution of wealth and opportunity by applying spiritual solutions

Establish equality among women and men.

Establish unity of all humanity.

Holy Days and Special Days

These days, eight of which commemorate specific events in Bahá'í history, are ones during which Bahá'ís are advised to suspend work and to request Bahá'í children be released from school: New Year (the vernal equinox, known as Naw-Rúz), First Day of Ridván, Ninth Day of Ridván, Twelfth Day of Ridván, Declaration of the Báb, Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, Martyrdom of the Báb, and the Twin Holy Days, the Birth of the Báb and the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh

Naw-Rúz

(March 20 or 21): The Bahá'í New Year's Day coincides with the spring equinox. Naw-Rúz is an ancient Persian festival celebrating the "new day" and for Bahá'ís it marks the end of the annual 19-Day Fast and is one of nine days of the year when work is suspended and children are exempted from attending school.

The Festival of Ridván

This a 12-day period during which Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed that He was the Messenger of God for this age. It begins on April 21 which is the day Bahá'í local elections are now held to elect local governing bodies. The 1st, 9th and 12th days of Ridván are celebrated as Holy Days.

Declaration of the Báb

A group of Islamic scholars set out to find the Promised One Who was expected to appear in 1844 in Shiraz. Among their group, Mulla Husayn was the first to succeed. In His own home in Shiraz, Persia after sunset May 22, the Báb declared to him that He was the promised Qa'im and revealed profound verses as proof.

Ascension of 'Bahá'u'lláh

This commemorates the passing of Bahá'u'lláh. It is observed on 12 'Azamat on the Badi calendar (28 or 29 May, adjusted according to the spring equinox). Work is suspended on this day. The typical observance consists of devotional readings and is held at 3:00 AM, as Bahá'u'lláh ascended to the next world about 3:00 AM on 29 May, 1892.

Martyrdom of the Báb

July 9th at noon is the commemoration of the Martyrdom of The Báb who was publicly executed.

Twin Holy Days

The **Birth of the Báb** (October 20, 1819) and the **Birth of Bahá'u'lláh** (November 12, 1817) occurred on consecutive days according to the Islamic lunar calendar (1 and 2 Muharram, respectively). These Holy Days are celebrated on the first and second days of the eighth lunar month after Naw-Rúz, and may fall as early as October 20-21 and as late as November 11-12. They are two of the holy days of the year when work is suspended and children are exempted from attending school.

Day of the Covenant

(Nov. 25 or 26). This festival commemorates Bahá'u'lláh's appointment of His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to be the Center of His Covenant. The Covenant is a key teaching in the Bahá'í Faith. The Greater Covenant agreement that God will always provide teachings through a divine Messenger and that humanity will recognize and obey the Messenger. The lesser Covenant concerns the successorship within the Bahá'í Faith – Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest son Abdu'l-Bahá as sole Interpreter of the scriptures. Abdu'l-Bahá then later appointed his grandson Shoghi Effendi to be Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi made Bahá'u'lláh's blueprint for an Administrative Order a reality which is now overseen by the Universal House of Justice, a body of 9 elected Baha'is who are the final authority about issues concerning the Bahá'í community. During the lifetime of Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'is had wanted to commemorate His birthday, but He instead designated that day to be a time to reflect on and celebrate the Covenant

The Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá Bahá'is observe the anniversary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, son of Bahá'u'lláh and His appointed successor, on Nov 28, 1921 in Haifa, in what is now northern Israel.

Bahá'í Months and Feast Days

Bahá (Splendour)	March 20 or 21
Jalál (Glory)	April 8 or 9 April
Jamál (Beauty)	April 27 or 28
'Azamat (Grandeur)	May 16 or 17
Núr (Light)	June 4 or 5
Raḥmat (Mercy)	June 23 or 24
Kalimát (Words)	July 12 or 13
Kamál (Perfection)	July 31 or August 1
Asmá' (Names)	August 19 or 20
'Izzat (Might)	September 7 or 8
Mashíyyat (Will)	September 26 or 27
'Ilm (Knowledge)	October 15 or 16
Qudrat (Power)	November 3 or 4
Qawl (Speech)	November 22 or 23
Masá'il (Questions)	December 11 or 12
Sharaf (Honour)	December 30 or 31
Sulṭán (Sovereignty)	January 18 or 19
Mulk (Dominion)	February 6 or 7
Ayyám-i-Há (Intercalary Days)	Floats between February 25 and March 1
'Alá' (Loftiness)	Month of Fasting, begins after Ayyám-i-Há