

preceding the Bahá'í new year, which occurs the day of the vernal equinox; and the period of fasting is therefore viewed as a time of spiritual preparation and regeneration for a new year's activities. Women who are nursing or pregnant, the aged, the sick, the traveler, those engaged in heavy labor, as well as children under the age of fifteen, are exempt from observance of the Fast.

The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of the same month, involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires.

“Fasting is the cause of awakening man. The heart becomes tender and the spirituality of man increases. This is produced by the fact that man's thoughts will be confined to the commemoration of God, and through this awakening and stimulation surely ideal advancements follow... Fasting is of two kinds, material and spiritual. The material fasting is abstaining from food or drink, that is, from the appetites of the body. But spiritual, ideal fasting is this, that man abstain from selfish passions, from negligence and from satanic animal traits.

Therefore, material fasting is a token of the spiritual fasting. That is: `O God! As I



am fasting from the appetites of the body and not occupied with eating and drinking, even so purify and make holy my heart and my life from aught else save Thy Love, and protect and preserve my soul from self-passions... Thus may the spirit associate with the Fragrances of Holiness and fast from everything else save Thy mention.”
— 'Abdu'l-Bahá



SOURCE: <http://info.bahai.org>

PRAYERS FOR THE FAST

In the Name of Him Who hath been promised in the Books of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed! The days of fasting have arrived wherein those servants who circle round Thy throne and have attained Thy presence have fasted. Say: O God of names and creator of heaven and earth! I beg of Thee by Thy Name, the All-Glorious, to accept the fast of those who have fasted for love of Thee and for the sake of Thy good-pleasure and have carried out what Thou hast bidden them in Thy Books and Tablets. I beseech Thee by them to assist me in the promotion of Thy Cause and to make me steadfast in Thy love, that my footsteps may not slip on account of the clamor of Thy creatures. Verily, Thou art powerful over whatsoever Thou willest. No God is there but Thee, the Quickener, the All-Powerful, the Most Bountiful, the Ancient of Days.

—Bahá'u'lláh

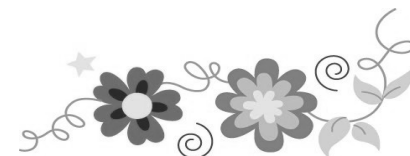
Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! I beseech Thee by this Revelation whereby darkness hath been turned into light, through which the Frequented Fane hath been built, and the Written Tablet revealed, and the Outspread Roll uncovered, to send down upon me and upon them who are in my company that which will enable us to soar into the heavens of Thy transcendent glory, and will wash us from the stain of such doubts as have hindered the suspicious from entering into the tabernacle of Thy unity.

I am the one, O my Lord, who hath held fast the cord of Thy loving-kindness, and clung to the hem of Thy mercy and favors. Do Thou ordain for me and for my loved ones the good of this world and of the world to come. Supply them, then, with the Hidden Gift Thou didst ordain for the choicest among Thy creatures.

These are, O my Lord, the days in which Thou hast bidden Thy servants to observe the Fast. Blessed is he that observeth the Fast wholly for Thy sake and with absolute detachment from all things except Thee. Assist me and assist them, O my Lord, to obey Thee and to keep Thy precepts. Thou, verily, hast power to do what Thou choosest.

There is no God but Thee, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. All praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

—Bahá'u'lláh



Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892)—Founder of the Bahá'í Faith

Born in 1817, Bahá'u'lláh was a member of one of the great patrician families of Persia. The family could trace its lineage to the ruling dynasties of Persia's imperial past, and was endowed with wealth and vast estates. Turning His back on the position at court which these advantages offered Him, Bahá'u'lláh became known for His generosity and kindness which made Him deeply loved among His countrymen.

This privileged position did not long survive Bahá'u'lláh's announcement of support for the message of the Báb. Engulfed in the waves of violence unleashed upon the Bábis after the Báb's execution Bahá'u'lláh suffered not only the loss of all His worldly endowments but was subjected to imprisonment, torture, and a series of banishments. The first was to Baghdad where, in 1863, He announced Himself as the One promised by the Báb. From Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh was sent to Constantinople, to Adrianople, and finally to Acre, in the Holy Land, where He arrived as a prisoner in 1868.

From Adrianople and later from Acre, Bahá'u'lláh addressed a series of letters to the rulers of His day that are among the most remarkable documents in religious history. They proclaimed the coming unification of humanity and the emergence of a world civilization.

The kings, emperors, and presidents of the nineteenth century were called upon to reconcile their differences, curtail their armaments, and devote their energies to the establishment of universal peace.

Bahá'u'lláh passed away at Bahji, just north of Acre, and is buried there. His teachings had already begun to spread beyond the confines

of the Middle East, and His Shrine is today the focal point of the world community which these teachings have brought into being.

Today, Bahá'u'lláh is recognized by millions throughout the world as the Messenger of God for this age. The Bahá'í Faith is founded on His teachings.

Source: <http://www.bahai.org/faq/facts/bahauallah>

PRINCIPLES OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

- The oneness of mankind.
- Universal peace upheld by a world government.
- Independent investigation of truth.
- The common foundation of all religions.
- The essential harmony of science and religion.
- Equality of men and women.
- Elimination of prejudice of all kinds.
- Universal compulsory education.
- A spiritual solution to the economic problem.
- A universal auxiliary language.

For more information:
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J. Warner



Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Fast

“...prayer and fasting is the cause of awakening and mindfulness and conducive to protection and preservation from tests.”

— 'Abdu'l-Bahá

AS has been the case with other revealed religions, the Bahá'í Faith sees great value in the practice of fasting as a discipline for the soul. Bahá'u'lláh designated a nineteen-day period each year when adult Bahá'ís fast from sunrise to sunset each day. This period coincides with the Bahá'í month of Ala (meaning Loftiness), from March 2 to 20, inclusive. This is the month immediately