

days. Local spiritual assemblies (mahafel-e ruhani-e mahalli) are elected on the first day of this festival. National spiritual assemblies (mahafel-e rohani-ye melli) are elected some time during the twelve-day period at a national convention, except every fifth year when the international convention is held to elect the Universal House of Justice.

Nowruz (?Id-e Nowruz). The new year in the Bahai calendar begins on the vernal equinox, the ancient Persian festival of Nowruz. The first day of the new year is a festival and holy day. At present the Bahais in the Middle East celebrate this day as determined astronomically, while in the rest of the Bahai world it is always celebrated on 21 March. The Universal House of Justice will eventually determine the point in the world which will be used to fix the day of Nowruz.

The Declaration of the Bab (Ba?tat-e Hazrat-e A?la, 23 May). The Bab himself fixed the day and time—two hours and eleven minutes after sunset—for the commemoration of the first announcement of his claims to his first disciple Molla Hosayn Bošru?i. Baha?-Allah confirmed its importance as one of two “Most Great Festivals” (see above).

The Birth of the Bab (Tawallod-e Hazrat-e A?la, 20 October). This festival commemorates the birth of the Bab in Shiraz in 1819.

The Birth of Baha?-Allah (Tawallod-e Hazrat-e Baha?-Allah, 12 November). This commemorates the birth of Baha?-Allah in Tehran in 1817. This and the birth of the Bab occur on the first and second days of Moharram when observed according to the Muslim calendar. Baha?-Allah refers to them as the “Twin Birthdays” and says that they “are accounted as one in the sight of God” (al-Ketab al-aqdas, tr. p. 105).

The Ascension of Baha?-Allah (So?ud-e Hazrat-e Baha?-Allah, 29 May). Commemorates the death of Baha?-Allah in the mansion of Bahji, near Acre (?Akka) in Palestine in 1892. It is observed by Bahais at three hours after midnight.

Martyrdom of the Bab (Šahadat-e Hazrat-e A?la, 9 July). Commemorates the execution of the Bab by firing-squad in Tabriz in 1850. It is observed by Bahais at noon.

There are two other festivals, but these are not holy days on which work should be suspended. They are the Ascension of ?Abd-al-Baha? (So?ud-e Hazrat-e ?Abd-al-Baha?, 28 November), commemorating the death of ?Abd-al-Baha? in 1921; and the Day of the Covenant (Ruz-e ahd wa mitaq, 26 November), which commemorates the establishment of ?Abd-al-Baha’s position as the successor to Baha?-Allah.

Bibliography: al-Ketab al-aqdas, Haifa, 1995; tr. as *The Kitab-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*, Haifa, 1992. *Montakabat az atar-e Hazrat-e Baha?-Allah*, Hofheim-Langenhain, Germany, 1984; tr. Shoghi Effendi as *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha?u’llah*, Wilmette, Ill., 1983. A compilation of scripture and other materials relating to the holy days can be

found in ?Abd-al-Hamid Ešraq Kavari, Ayyam-e tes?a, Los Angeles, 1981. Similar material can be found in English translation in B. Forghani, ed., Days to Remember, Mona Vale, New South Wales, 1983, and in a series of books published by Kalimat Press, Los Angeles, about each individual holy day.

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