

## Ayyám-i-Há – a Holy Day Program

By Susan Gammage <sup>1</sup>

My God, my Fire and my Light! The days which Thou hast named the Ayyám-i-Há in Thy Book have begun, O Thou Who art the King of names, and the fast which Thy most exalted Pen hath enjoined unto all who are in the kingdom of Thy creation to observe is approaching. I entreat Thee, O my Lord, by these days and by all such as have during that period clung to the cord of Thy commandments, and laid hold on the handle of Thy precepts, to grant that unto every soul may be assigned a place within the precincts of Thy court, and a seat at the revelation of the splendors of the light of Thy countenance. These, O my Lord, are Thy servants whom no corrupt inclination hath kept back from what Thou didst send down in Thy Book. They have bowed themselves before Thy Cause, and received Thy Book with such resolve as is born of Thee, and observed what Thou hadst prescribed unto them, and chosen to follow that which had been sent down by Thee.

Thou seest, O my Lord, how they have recognized and confessed whatsoever Thou hast revealed in Thy Scriptures. Give them to drink, O my Lord, from the hands of Thy graciousness the waters of Thine eternity. Write down, then, for them the recompense ordained for him that hath immersed himself in the ocean of Thy presence, and attained unto the choice wine of Thy meeting. I implore Thee, O Thou the King of kings and the Pitier of the downtrodden, to ordain for them the good of this world and of the world to come. Write down for them, moreover, what none of Thy creatures hath discovered, and number them with those who have circled round Thee, and who move about Thy throne in every world of Thy worlds. Thou, truly, art the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. (Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 235)

The Ayyám-i-Há holiday begins each year on the evening of February 25 and ends at sunset on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Of this period Bahá'u'lláh writes:

It behoveth the people of Bahá, throughout these days, to provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy, and with joy and exultation to hail and glorify their Lord, to sing His praise and magnify His Name.

A closer look at the history and background of Ayyám-i-Há can help us to value it even more for its unique spirit, resist any temptation to turn it into a "Christmas equivalent," and discover some of its beautiful and mystical symbolic meanings.

The Bahá'í calendar of 19 months of 19 days needs 4 days (5 in leap years) to equal a solar year. By definition such added days are "intercalary" days. In revealing this

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"Badi'" calendar, the Báb did not say exactly where to place the extra days. Some of the early Bábís included them as part of the Fast, others stopped fasting 4 or 5 days before Naw-Rúz. Bahá'u'lláh named these days in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and specified their place in the year when He wrote:

Let the days in excess of the months be placed before the month of fasting. We have ordained that these, amid all nights and days, shall be the manifestations of the letter "Há", and thus they have not been bounded by the limits of the year and its months...and when they end—these days of giving that precede the season of restraint—let them enter upon the Fast. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the Lord of all mankind."

As in His prayer for Ayyám-i-Há, Bahá'u'lláh juxtaposes these "days of giving" with the Fast's "season of restraint." Ayyám-i-Há is intended partly as spiritual preparation for the Fast, a reminder of its approach, and a way of fostering the detachment from material things so necessary for the Fast.

It behoveth the people of Bahá, throughout these days, to provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy, and with joy and exultation to hail and glorify their Lord, to sing His praise and magnify His Name; and when they end—these days of giving that precede the season of restraint—let them enter upon the Fast. (Baha'u'llah, Kitáb-i-Aqdas, paragraph 16)

Thus Ayyám-i-Há can be thought of as days outside of time, days that symbolize eternity, infinity, and the mystery and unknowable Essence of God Himself. Contemplation during these days of the timeless mystery of the Essence of God provides us the "joy and exultation" with which to "sing His praise and magnify His Name."

Happy Ayyám-i-Há Song:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmjKZeby1po&feature=related>