

# Bahá'í calendar

The **Badí' calendar** used in the Bahá'í Faith is a solar calendar consisting of 19 months and 4-5 Intercalary Days, with new year at the moment of Northern spring equinox. Each month is named after virtues (e.g. Perfection, Mercy), as are the days of the week. The first year is dated from 1844 CE, the year in which the Báb began teaching.

Years on the calendar are annotated with the date notation of BE (Bahá'í Era). The Bahá'í year 180 BE will start on 21 March 2023.

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## History

The Bahá'í calendar started from the original Badí' calendar, created by the Báb in the *Kitabu'l-Asmá*<sup>[1]</sup> and the *Persian Bayán* (5:3) in the 1840s.<sup>[2]</sup> An early version of the calendar began to be implemented during his time.<sup>[3]</sup> It used a scheme of 19 months of 19 days (19×19) for 361 days, plus intercalary days to make the calendar a solar calendar. The first day of the early implementation of the calendar year was Nowruz,<sup>[4]</sup> while the intercalary days were assigned differently than the later Bahá'í implementation. The calendar contains many symbolic meanings and allusions<sup>[5]</sup> including connections to prophecies of the Báb about the next Manifestation of God termed He whom God shall make manifest.<sup>[6]</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, who claimed to be the one prophesied by the Báb, confirmed and adopted this calendar. Around 1870, he instructed Nabíl-i-A'zam, the author of *The Dawn-Breakers*, to write an overview of the Badí' calendar.<sup>[7]</sup> In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (1873) Bahá'u'lláh made Naw-Rúz the first day of the year, and also clarified the position of the Intercalary days to immediately precede the last month.<sup>[2][8]</sup> Bahá'u'lláh set Naw-Rúz to the day on which the sun passes into the constellation Aries. Bahá'ís interpret this formula as a specification of the vernal equinox, though where that should be determined was not defined.<sup>[8]</sup>

The calendar was first implemented in the West in 1907.<sup>[9]</sup>

The Bahá'í scriptures left some issues regarding the implementation of the Badí' calendar to be resolved by the Universal House of Justice before the calendar can be observed uniformly worldwide.

On 10 July 2014 the Universal House of Justice announced provisions that will enable the common implementation of the Badí' calendar worldwide, beginning at sunset 20 March 2015,<sup>[10]</sup> coinciding with the completion of the ninth cycle of the calendar (see below).<sup>[11]</sup> Before that time, the Bahá'í calendar was synchronized to the Gregorian calendar by starting the year at sunset on March 20, regardless of when the vernal equinox technically occurs, meaning that the extra day of a leap year occurred simultaneously in both calendars. The intercalary days always stretched from 26 February to 1 March, automatically including the Gregorian leap day so that there were 4 intercalary days in a regular year, and 5 in a Gregorian leap year.<sup>[12]</sup> The Universal House of Justice selected Tehran, the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh, as the location at which the time and date of the vernal equinox is to be determined according to astronomical tables from reliable sources.<sup>[7][10][13]</sup> These changes, which "unlocked" the Badí' calendar from the Gregorian calendar, came into effect at the start of year 172 BE.<sup>[7][14]</sup>

## Significance

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As the name **Badí'** (*wondrous* or *unique*) suggests, the Bahá'í calendar is indeed a unique institution in the history of human culture. Sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel notes that the 19-day cycle creates a distinctive rhythm which enhances group solidarity. (Zerubavel argues that the 19 day cycle is more properly defined as a week, rather than a month, because it bears "no connection whatsoever" to the lunar cycle.) Furthermore, by finding the closest approximation of the square root of the annual cycle, Bahá'ís "have managed to establish the most symmetrical relationship possible between the week and the year, which no one else throughout history has ever managed to accomplish."<sup>[15]</sup>

## Years

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Years in the Bahá'í calendar are counted from Thursday 21 March 1844, the beginning of the Bahá'í Era or Badí' Era (abbreviated *BE* or *B.E.*).<sup>[16]</sup> Year 1 BE thus began at sundown 20 March 1844.

The length of each year is strictly defined as the number of days between the opening and closing days of the year, with the number of intercalary days adjusted as needed. The year ends on the day before the following vernal equinox.

## Vernal Equinox

The first day of each year (Naw-Rúz) is the day (from sunset to sunset) in Tehran containing the moment of the vernal equinox. This is determined in advance by astronomical computations from reliable sources.<sup>[10]</sup>

Since the Gregorian calendar is not tied to the equinox, the Gregorian calendar shifts around by a day or two each year, as shown in the following table.<sup>[17]</sup>

Bahá'í Year	Gregorian date corresponding to <u>Naw-Rúz</u>
174	20 March 2017
175	21 March 2018
176	21 March 2019
177	20 March 2020
178	20 March 2021
179	21 March 2022
180	21 March 2023
181	20 March 2024
182	20 March 2025
183	21 March 2026
184	21 March 2027

## Months

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The Bahá'í calendar is composed of 19 months, each with 19 days.<sup>[18]</sup> The intercalary days, known as Ayyám-i-Há, occur between the 18th and 19th months.

The names of the months were adopted by the Báb from the Du'ay-i-Sahar, a Ramadan dawn prayer by Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, the fifth Imam of Twelver Shi'ah Islam.<sup>[19][20]</sup> These month names are considered to be referring to attributes of God.

In the Persian Bayan the Báb divides the months into four groups known as "fire", "air", "water" and "earth" – which are three, four, six and six months long respectively.<sup>[21]</sup> Robin Mirshahi suggests a possible link with four realms described in Bahá'í cosmology.<sup>[5]</sup> Ismael Velasco relates this to the "arc of ascent".<sup>[22]</sup>

In the following table, the Gregorian date indicates the first full day of the month when Naw-Rúz coincides with 21 March. The month begins at sunset of the day previous to the one listed.

Month	Usual Gregorian dates (when Naw-Rúz coincides with 21 March) <sup>[18]</sup>	Arabic name <sup>[18]</sup>	Arabic script	English name <sup>[18]</sup>	Additional meanings in authorized English translations of Bahá'í scripture <sup>[5]</sup>
1	21 March – 8 April	<b>Bahá</b>	بهاء	Splendour	glory, light, excellence
2	9 April – 27 April	<b>Jalál</b>	جلال	Glory	majesty
3	28 April – 16 May	<b>Jamál</b>	جمال	Beauty	charm
4	17 May – 4 June	<b>‘Aẓamat</b>	عظمة	Grandeur	glory, majesty, dominion, greatness
5	5 June – 23 June	<b>Núr</b>	نور	Light	radiance, brightness, splendour, effulgence, illumination
6	24 June – 12 July	<b>Raḥmat</b>	رحمة	Mercy	blessing, grace, favour, loving kindness, providence, compassion
7	13 July – 31 July	<b>Kalimát</b>	كلمات	Words	utterance, the word of God
8	1 August – 19 August	<b>Kamál</b>	كمال	Perfection	excellence, fullness, consummation, maturity
9	20 August – 7 September	<b>Asmá’</b>	اسماء	Names	titles, attributes, designations
10	8 September – 26 September	<b>‘Izzat</b>	عزة	Might	glory, power, exaltation, honour, majesty, grandeur, strength, sovereignty, magnificence
11	27 September – 15 October	<b>Maṣḥíyyat</b>	مشية	Will	purpose, the primal will, the will of God
12	16 October – 3 November	<b>‘Ilm</b>	علم	Knowledge	wisdom, divine knowledge, revelation
13	4 November – 22 November	<b>Qudrat</b>	قدرة	Power	might, authority, dominion, celestial might, omnipotence, transcendent power, indomitable strength, all-pervading power, ascendancy, divine power
14	23 November – 11 December	<b>Qawl</b>	قول	Speech	words, testimony
15	12 December – 30 December	<b>Masá’il</b>	مسائل	Questions	principles, truths, matters, mysteries, subtleties, obscurities, intricacies, problems <sup>[note 1]</sup>
16	31 December – 18 January	<b>Sh̄araf</b>	شرف	Honour	excellence, glory
17	19 January – 6 February	<b>Sulṭán</b>	سلطان	Sovereignty	king, lord, majesty, sovereign, monarch, authority, potency, the power of sovereignty, the all-possessing, the most potent of rulers
18	7 February – 25 February	<b>Mulk</b>	ملك	Dominion	sovereignty, kingdom, realm, universe
ic	26 February – 1 March	<b>Ayyám-i- Há</b>	ايام الهاء	The Days of Há	
19	2 March – 20 March ( <u>Month of</u>	<b>‘Alá’</b>	علاء	Loftiness	glory

## Ayyám-i-Há

The introduction of intercalation marked an important break from Islam, as under the Islamic calendar the practice of intercalation had been specifically prohibited in the Qur'an.<sup>[2]</sup>

The number of the intercalary days is determined in advance to ensure that the year ends on the day before the next vernal equinox. This results in 4 or 5 intercalary days being added. These days are inserted between the 18th and 19th months, falling around the end of February in the Gregorian calendar. The number of days added is unrelated to the timing of the Gregorian leap year.

## Significance in the Bahá'í Faith

The annual Nineteen Day Fast is held during the final month of 'Alá'. The month of fasting is followed by Naw-Rúz, the new year.

The monthly Nineteen Day Feast is celebrated on the first day of each month, preferably starting any time between the sunset on the eve of the day to the sunset ending the day.

## Days in a Month

The nineteen days in a month have the same names as the months of the year (above), so, for example, the 9th day of each month is Asmá, or "Names".<sup>[24][25]</sup>

## Weekdays

The Bahá'í week starts on Saturday, and ends on Friday.<sup>[26]</sup> As in Judaism and Islam, days begin at sunset and end at sunset of the following solar day. Bahá'í writings indicate that Friday is to be kept as a day of rest.<sup>[27][28]</sup> The practice of keeping Friday as a day of rest is currently not observed in all countries; for example, in the UK, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís confirmed it does not currently keep this practice.<sup>[29]</sup>

Arabic Name <sup>[18]</sup>	Arabic Script	English Translation <sup>[26]</sup>	Day of the Week <sup>[18]</sup>
Jalál	جلال	Glory	Saturday
Jamál	جمال	Beauty	Sunday
Kamál	كمال	Perfection	Monday
Fiḏál	فصال	Grace	Tuesday
'Idál	عدال	Justice	Wednesday
Istijlál	استجلال	Majesty	Thursday
Istiqlál	استقلال	Independence	Friday

## Cycles

Also existing in the Bahá'í calendar system is a 19 year cycle called Váḥid and a 361 year (19×19) supercycle called Kull-i-Shay' (literally, "All Things").<sup>[26]</sup> The expression Kull-i-Shay' was used frequently by the Báb.<sup>[30]</sup> It has its origins in Sufism and the significance of the numbers 19 and 361 were possibly already associated by Ibn Arabi (1165–1240).<sup>[30]</sup>

Each of the 19 years in a Vahid has been given a name as shown in the table below.<sup>[26]</sup> The 10th Váḥid of the 1st Kull-i-Shay' started on 21 March 2015, and the 11th Váḥid will begin in 2034.<sup>[31]</sup>

The current Bahá'í year, year 179 BE (21 March 2022 – 20 March 2023), is year Jád of the 10th Váḥid of the 1st Kull-i-Shay'.<sup>[31]</sup> The 2nd Kull-i-Shay' will begin in 2205.<sup>[31]</sup>

The concept of a 19-year cycle has existed in some form since the 4th century BCE. The Metonic cycle represents an invented measure that approximately correlates solar and lunar markings of time and which appears in several calendar systems.

Years in a Váḥid

No.	Persian Name	Arabic Script	English Translation
1	Alif	أ	A
2	Bá'	ب	B
3	Ab	أب	Father
4	Dál	د	D
5	Báb	باب	Gate
6	Váv	و	V
7	Abad	أبد	Eternity
8	Jád	جار	Generosity
9	Bahá	بهاء	Splendour
10	Ḥubb	حب	Love
11	Bahháj	بهاج	Delightful
12	Javáb	جواب	Answer
13	Aḥad	احد	Single
14	Vahháb	وهاب	Bountiful
15	Vidád	وداد	Affection
16	Badí'	بدیع	Beginning
17	Bahí	بهی	Luminous
18	Abhá	ابهی	Most Luminous
19	Váḥid	واحد	Unity

See also

- List of observances set by the Bahá'í calendar
- Bahá'í Holy Days
- Bahá'í Faith

- Calendar
- Intercalation (timekeeping)
- 19 (number)
- Zoroastrian calendar

## Notes

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1. In a provisional translation of selections from the Báb's *Kitabu'l-Asmá'*, Bahá'í scholar Stephen Lambden adds "objectives", "propositions" as alternative translations for "questions".<sup>[23]</sup>

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## Further reading

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- Slide Show: Introduction to the Badí' Calendar (<https://www.slideshare.net/glen91/introduction-to-the-bad-calendar>)
- Feast Days by year (<https://www.jeffreyrbrown.info/NewHolyDays/NewCalendar.html>)
- Badí' Calendar Calculator (<https://www.badi-calendar.com/>) (detailed information about past and future dates, specific to location)
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