



# The Ridvan Festival

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21st April - 2nd May

## Religion Media Centre

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## The Ridvan Festival

- The time that Baha'u'llah spent at the Garden of Ridvan in April 1863, and the associated festival and celebration, has great significance for Baha'is. Baha'u'llah calls it one of two 'Most Great Festivals' and describes the first day as 'the Day of supreme felicity'.
- It was during the Festival of Ridvan that Baha'u'llah, for the first time, publicly declared His station as a Divine Educator, and as the Promised Manifestation of God foretold in all the world's religions. He brought with him a Revelation that heralded a new era – the beginning of the Baha'i Faith.
- Baha'u'llah had been exiled to Baghdad from Tehran in Persia in 1853, but in 1863 the authorities began to fear his increasing popularity and influence, and it was decided that Baha'u'llah would now be exiled to Istanbul.
- So that his family and followers could prepare for the journey, Baha'u'llah left his house on 22 April 1863 and moved to the Najibiyyih Garden, which he later renamed the Ridvan Garden, where he proclaimed the Festival of Ridvan.
- Ridvan literally translates to 'paradise' in Arabic and can be used as such in Baha'i Holy Writings to describe a place or station of spiritual beauty and significance.
- Ridvan is observed everywhere according to the Baha'i calendar. It begins on 21 April. The ninth day falls on 29 April and the twelfth on 2 May.
- During Baha'u'llah's first day in the garden, he made three further announcements:
  1. Abrogating religious war
  2. That there would not be another Manifestation of God for another 1,000 years
  3. That all the names of God were fully manifest in all things.
- Like other Baha'i holy days, there are few specific rules concerning the observance of Ridvan. It is usually observed with community gatherings for prayer and celebration on the three holy days.

## Baha'i Elections

- Most Baha'i elections are held during Ridvan.
- Baha'u'llah established a unique system of administration that has governed the Baha'i community up until today. There is no clergy in the Baha'i Faith, and the administration is founded on a set of unique electoral and consultative principles, organised around elected governing councils, operating at the local, national, and international levels.
- At the local level, Baha'i community life is governed by the Local Spiritual Assembly – a freely elected body of nine people who guide and administer the affairs of the community.
- The Local Spiritual Assembly is elected on the first day of Ridvan, which begins, according to the Baha'i calendar, at sunset on April 20 and ends at sunset on April 21.
- Across the world Baha'is hold a National Convention once a year in their respective countries for the primary purpose of electing nine members who will serve on the nation's Baha'i national administrative body called 'The National Spiritual Assembly'.
- An International Convention is held once every five years at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel to elect the members of the supreme global governing and administrative body of the Baha'i Faith, The Universal House of Justice.