

The Fast

The period of fasting is a time of cleansing and renewal. Turning away from food and drink reminds us that we are spiritual as well as physical beings.

The Bahá'í fast lasts 19 days, from 2 March to 20 March. This is the month of 'Ala' (Loftiness) in the Bahá'í calendar. During this time Bahá'ís do not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset.

The spirit in which we approach the fast is very important. It is not enough just to abstain from food and drink. One should spend time in prayer and meditation and consider how one can improve and enrich one's life. The fast is a time to devote special attention to cleansing one's heart of selfish desires, prejudices, lusts and other impurities. This spiritual preparation helps a person begin the Bahá'í year, which starts at Naw Rúz immediately after the fast, strengthened and renewed.

The fast is often a time of great closeness in Bahá'í families and communities. Many Bahá'ís enjoy gathering at dawn for breakfast and prayers, and at sunset to break the fast together.

In some situations Baha'u'llah says one should not fast. Bahá'ís who are travelling, sick, pregnant, breast-feeding, over 70 or under 15, or engaged in heavy labour are not required to fast. All other Bahá'ís should take advantage of the opportunities for spiritual growth and renewal that the Fast offers.

(Adapted from [The Light of Baha'u'llah](#), Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette)