First Day of Ridvan

Celebration Program

Program

1. Opening song with images (slides or video) Song (???)
2. Introduction
   a. Welcome
   b. Historical Account
3. Prayers and Writings
4. Short Talk on the Transformative Power of Religions

This program consists of three parts. This is a suggestion that can be modified as one sees fit.

I. The first part is an introduction that begins with a song about Ridvan. The link to the song is provided below. Following the song, a brief introduction can be given about the historical events. Below are some excerpts that can be used to prepare a brief historical account. The accompanying pdf document with pictures has selected images that can be used. The numbering of the headings below corresponds to the picture/slide in the accompanying pdf document.

II. The second part is that of prayers and selected Writings. The selected Writings are excerpts from Tablets of Bahaullah revealed for the occasion of Ridvan. The prayers are also in the accompanying pdf document. You might wish to include some songs in this part.

III. The third part consists of a brief talk about Jinab-i-Zayn as an example of a soul that was transformed by the Power of Divine Message. For this part, you will find brief texts that can be read beforehand so to convey the story with your own words. A few images are also available in the accompanying pdf document. One way to conclude this brief talk is to personally reflect on how we can further our spiritual transformation in this day.

The program is then concluded with a prayer. Naturally, the prayers can be extended with (additional or replacing) prayers read by the friends or songs performed live (or both).
1. **Song about Ridvan**

The song is at [https://youtu.be/0cxPf24oCHE](https://youtu.be/0cxPf24oCHE)

2. **His Family Joining in the Ridvan Garden**

*Image: River of Tigris*

“Bahá’u’lláh left His home “on the thirty-second day after Naw-Ruz for the Ridvan Garden. On that same day the river overflowed and only on the ninth day was it possible for His family to join Him in the Garden. The river then overflowed a second time, and on the twelfth day it subsided and all went to Him.” (A Flame of Fire, A.Q. Faizi)

During the twelve days of His sojourn in that garden, every morning and every afternoon He would speak of the Báb’s Cause and declare His own. (My Memories of Bahá’u’lláh (Ustád Muhammad-‘Alíy-i- Salmáni))

3. **Pile of Roses**

*Image: Roses*

“Every day,” Nabil has related, “ere the hour of dawn, the gardeners would pick the roses which lined the four avenues of the garden, and would pile them in the center of the floor of His blessed tent. So great would be the heap that when His companions gathered to drink their morning tea in His presence, they would be unable to see each other across it. All these roses Baha’u’llah would, with His own hands, entrust to those whom He dismissed from His presence every morning to be delivered, on His behalf, to His Arab and Persian friends in the city.” (God Passes By, p. 153)

4. **Consider these Nightingales**

*Image: Painting from Qajar Era*

“One night,” he continues, “the ninth night of the waxing moon, I happened to be one of those who watched beside His blessed tent. As the hour of midnight approached, I saw Him issue from His tent, pass by the places where some of His companions were sleeping, and begin to pace up and down the moonlit, flower-bordered avenues of the garden. So loud was the singing of the nightingales on every side that only those who were near Him could hear distinctly His voice. He continued to walk until, pausing in the midst of one of these avenues, He observed: ‘Consider these nightingales. So great is their love for these roses, that sleepless from dusk till dawn, they warble their melodies and commune with burning passion with the object of their adoration. How then can those who claim to be afire with the rose-like beauty of the Beloved choose to sleep?’ (God Passes By, p. 153)
5. Visitors

*Image: Tents of Bahá’u’ lláh (probably this kind but not these exact ones)*

Bahá’u’ lláh stayed in the Garden for twelve days and during the entire period, the eminent rulers, ’úlamá and jurists attained His blessed presence in a raised tabernacle and asked complex questions and received conclusive replies which resolved their perplexities. Some of the friends were engaged [in service] and those whose residence was in Baghdad would come during the day and return home at night, and yet return to the Garden the next morning. This lowly one was among those servants [in the Garden] who was engaged in carrying out whatever he was instructed. (*A Lifetime with Bahá’u’ lláh, A.H. Ashchi, Translated by Ahang Rabbani*)

For three successive nights I watched and circled round His blessed tent. Every time I passed by the couch whereon He lay, I would find Him wakeful, and every day, from morn till eventide, I would see Him ceaselessly engaged in conversing with the stream of visitors who kept flowing in from Baghdad. Not once could I discover in the words He spoke any trace of dissimulation.” (*God Passes By, p. 153*)

Outstanding among them was the renowned Alusi, the Mufti of Baghdad, who, with eyes dimmed with tears, execrated the name of Nasiri’d-Din Shah, whom he deemed to be primarily responsible for so unmerited a banishment. “I have ceased to regard him,” he openly asserted, “as Nasiri’d-Din (the helper of the Faith), but consider him rather to be its wrecker.” (*God Passes By, p. 149*)

Another distinguished visitor was the governor himself, Namiq Pasha, who, after expressing in the most respectful terms his regret at the developments which had precipitated Baha’u’ llah’s departure, and assuring Him of his readiness to aid Him in any way he could, handed to the officer appointed to accompany Him a written order, commanding the governors of the provinces through which the exiles would be passing to extend to them the utmost consideration. “Whatever you require,” he, after profuse apologies, informed Baha’u’ llah, “you have but to command. We are ready to carry it out. Extend thy consideration to Our loved ones,” was the reply to his insistent and reiterated offers, “and deal with them with kindness” – a request to which he gave his warm and unhesitating assent. (*A Flame of Fire, A.Q. Faizi*)

6. Prayers and Excerpts from the Bahá’í Writings

I. Praise be to Thee, O Thou our Lord the Most Merciful! This is one of the days of the festival Thou hast named Riḍván, a festival wherein Thou hast manifested Thy sovereignty over all who are in Thy heavens and on Thine earth, notwithstanding that the people have arisen to harm Thee and to extinguish Thy light, and wherein the Luminary of Thy oneness hath shone forth from the dayspring of Thy House upon all things visible and invisible.
I beseech Thee, O my God, by this Day and by Him Whom Thou hast made to be the Dawning-Place of Thy revelation and the Dayspring of Thine inspiration, to ordain for Thy loved ones the good of this world and of the world to come, and to number them with those whom naught can distract from Thy remembrance and praise. Strengthen, then, their hearts in such wise that the ascendancy of those who have disbelieved in Thee and in Thy signs may never dismay them.

O Lord! Illumine their eyes with the light of Thy knowledge, and their hearts with the splendour of Thy countenance. Bind, then, their souls and spirits together, that through their unity all the inhabitants of Thy dominion may become united.

Potent art Thou over all who are in the kingdoms of Thy revelation and Thy creation. Thou, verily, art the Almighty, the All-Bountiful. Praised be Thou, O Lord of the worlds!

II. This is the ninth day of Riḍván, O my God, and on this day one of Thy loved ones hath, as a token of his love for Thy Beauty and in the eagerness of his devotion to Thee, invited Him Who is the Manifestation of Thy Self and the Dayspring of Thy glory to leave His room in the prison for another. There he hath spread before Thy presence such of Thy gifts as he hath been able to provide, notwithstanding that the people had plundered all his possessions and the possessions of others among Thy loved ones. O Lord, since Thou hast gathered them round Thee and aided them to attain this surpassing grace, endue them with constancy in Thy Cause and bind their hearts together in such wise that no differences may arise in their midst. Grant, then, that they may guide all people unto this Luminary, the like of which the eye of creation hath never beheld and which standeth peerless in the realms of the seen and the unseen.

III. Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! This is one of the days of Thy Riḍván Festival whereon Thou didst shed the splendour of Thy name, the All-Merciful, upon all the peoples of the earth, and didst manifest Thy power and Thy sovereignty unto all created things. Thou seest, O Lord, how on this day one of Thy loved ones hath invited the Manifestation of Thine Essence from His room to another room in this prison, wherein a gathering hath been held in Thy name and adorned with the ornament of Thine own Self, in such wise that the Sun of Thy beauty hath shone forth above its horizon. Blessed be the one who hath attained thereunto, blessed the day that hath been honoured with Thy revelation, and blessed the land that hath been illumined by the light of Thy Countenance.

O Lord! Ordain for him, and for Thy servants who have been hindered from meeting Thee, the recompense decreed for such as have attained Thy presence and convened a gathering to exalt Thy name and Thy remembrance. Write down, then, for them
what Thou hast written down for such as enjoy near access to Thee. Thy might, in truth, is equal to all things.

IV.  

*He is God.* Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! This is one of the days of Thy Riḍván Festival whereon a corner of this prison hath been decked forth for the appearance of Him Who is the Exponent of Thy beauty, granting the request of one whose ardent devotion hath prompted him to invite Thee. All praise be to Thee, inasmuch as Thou hast, as a token of Thy bounty unto them that abide beneath Thy shadow and circle round Thy being, shone forth on this day above the horizon of the prison with such splendour as to illumine the entire creation.

This is the Day whereon Thou didst unloose Thy tongue and bestow in abundance the gems of inner meaning and utterance upon the peoples of the world. Quicken, then, O Lord, through this heavenly cup, all who dwell on earth, and ordain that which will be profitable unto those among the people of Bahá who long to behold Thy face, but whom the misdeeds of Thine enemies have debarred therefrom, O King of Names and Ruler of earth and heaven. Bestow upon them, moreover, a portion of Thy manifold bounties in these days whereon every abased one hath been exalted, every faithful soul invested with Thy grace, every chilled heart enkindled, every poor one enriched, and every seeker sent forth upon the path.

Lauded art Thou, O Lord, for having singled out Thy loved ones and chosen them from amongst Thy people, and for having turned Thy gaze towards them from this spot wherein He Who is the Embodiment of Thy Cause lieth imprisoned. O Lord, withhold not from them the things Thou dost possess, but so enrapture their hearts through the breezes of Thy Revelation that they may detach themselves from all else but Thee and set their faces towards the court of Thy grace and generosity. Potent art Thou to do what Thou pleasest, and powerful art Thou over all things. All praise be to Thee, O Desire of the worlds!

V.  

Magnified be Thy name, O my God, for that Thou hast manifested the Day which is the King of Days, the Day which Thou didst announce unto Thy chosen Ones and Thy Prophets in Thy most excellent Tablets, the Day whereon Thou didst shed the splendor of the glory of all Thy names upon all created things. Great is his blessedness whosoever hath set himself towards Thee, and entered Thy presence, and caught the accents of Thy voice.

I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by the name of Him round Whom circleth in adoration the kingdom of Thy names, that Thou wilt graciously assist them that are dear to Thee to glorify Thy word among Thy servants, and to shed abroad Thy praise amidst Thy creatures, so that the ecstasies of Thy revelation may fill the souls of all the dwellers of Thine earth.
Since Thou hast guided them, O my Lord, unto the living waters of Thy grace, grant, by Thy bounty, that they may not be kept back from Thee; and since Thou hast summoned them to the habitation of Thy throne, drive them not out from Thy presence, through Thy loving-kindness. Send down upon them what shall wholly detach them from aught else except Thee, and make them able to soar in the atmosphere of Thy nearness, in such wise that neither the ascendency of the oppressor nor the suggestions of them that have disbelieved in Thy most august and most mighty Self shall be capable of keeping them back from Thee.

I.

Excerpts from Ḥúr-i-‘Ujáb (Tablet of the Wondrous Maiden)

The hallowed Beauty shone resplendent from behind the veil. How wondrous a thing, how wondrous indeed!

And, lo, the flame of rapture caused all souls to swoon away. How wondrous is this, how wondrous indeed!

Rising up, they soared unto the blest pavilion ’neath the throne of heaven’s canopy. How wondrous a mystery, how wondrous indeed!

Say: The Maiden of Eternity unveiled Her face—may her wondrous beauty be exalted indeed!—

Shedding forth from earth to heaven its resplendent rays. How wondrous a light, how wondrous indeed!

A lightning glance She cast, as piercing as a shooting star—how wondrous Her glance, how wondrous indeed!—

A glance consuming every name and every title in its flames. How wondrous a feat, how wondrous indeed!

To the dwellers of the realm of dust She turned Her gaze. How wondrous Her gaze, how wondrous indeed!

And then did all creation shake and pass away. How astounding a death, how astounding indeed!

7. The Story of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín

- Mullah Zaynu'l-'Abadin, given the title Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín (meaning Ornament of Them that Are Nigh unto God), also called Jináb-i-Zayn, was one of the most eminent early believers and one of the “Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh”.

- Furthermore, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that he was “one of the greatest of all the Bab’s companions and all the loved ones of Bahá’u’lláh.” In fact, so great did Bahá’u’lláh love Jináb-i-Zayn that, in one of His Tablets, He says (provisional translation): Zaynu'l-
Muqarrabin, The name of those who are mentioned in your letters, those names have been mentioned by the Pen on High (Qalam-i-Ala), and this is due to the bounty I have for you.

8. Recognizing the Truth

- Najafabad was a small village and information was shared quickly. A Babi who visited the village, Jináb-i-Zayn if he would be allowed to give a sermon at the mosque of Jináb-i-Zayn. Jináb-i-Zayn agreed as he had the policy of allowing all visiting Mullahs to give sermons at his mosque. Jináb-i-Zayn expected a traditional mainstream sermon but was very surprised that it was about a tradition on development of our inner selves. Jináb-i-Zayn found the sermon to be very interesting and listened attentively to every word.

- They had a conversation where this young man taught Jinab-i-Zayn about the Bab. Jináb-i-Zayn was very confused as he had heard sound and reasonable arguments, but not been presented with any conclusive proofs. Mullah Muhammad left Najafabad quite abruptly when he was informed that the people of Najafabad referred to him as a Bábi. This caused Jináb-i-Zayn to remain perplexed and confused for he had many questions but no one to ask.

- After some time, Jináb-i-Zayn went to a meeting with some Bábis. As time passed, it was time for the Muslim evening obligatory prayer. Jináb-i-Zayn told his friend that these people are Bábis but we are not. We still have to honour our own obligations (referring to the Muslim evening obligatory prayer). Jináb-i-Zayn had a “mohr” (a piece of clay used to put your forehead on when praying the obligatory prayer) in his pocket that he reached for. His friend commented that there is still time to midnight and that they can pray later.

- As this was taking place, the owner of the house brought a piece of paper and handed it to Mirza Sulayman who started reading them. As he had finished reading the first verse and began to read the second, Jináb-i-Zayn put back the “mohr” in his pocket.

- Jináb-i-Zayn thought to himself that he had believed in Islam because the verses of the Quran are the proof of its validity. He said to himself that the verse he had just heard was of the same source as that of the Quran. If this verse he just heard were not holy, then he would have to deny the Quran. If this is the case, then Islam is false and therefore, what would be the meaning of him saying the obligatory prayer. But if this verse is the proof, we have to follow the teachings of this new Messenger of God, and before we know what that is, we are not obliged to say the obligatory prayer.
Naturally the new Manifestation has come with new laws and ordinances, just as the Quran foretold. Jináb-i-Zayn thought that logic dictates the same. If the old laws and ordinances would not be changed, then the new Faith is without power. What would then be the point of a new Manifestation?

9. Arising to Serve the Cause

- As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains, “He rid himself of all impeding veils; his doubts dispelled, he began to extol and glorify the Beauty promised from of old. In his own home, and at Isfahan, he became notorious for declaring far and wide that the advent of the long-desired One had come to pass.”

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes further, “By the hypocrites, he was mocked, cursed and tormented. As for the people, “the mass, as a snake in the grass,” who had worshiped him before, now rose up to do him harm. Every day brought on a fresh cruelty, a new torment from his oppressors. He endured it all, and went on teaching with great eloquence. He remained staunch, unmoved, as their wrath increased. In his hands he held out a full cup of Divine glad tidings, offering to all who came that heady draught of the knowledge of God. He was utterly without fear, knew nothing of danger, and swiftly followed the holy path of the Lord.”

- Jináb-i-Zayn received a Tablet from Bahá’u’lláh. This Tablet moved Jináb-i-Zayn and he wrote back with some questions to the Blessed Beauty. The Blessed Beauty, in a second Tablet, responded to Jináb-i-Zayn’s questions. Reading this Tablet, Jináb-i-Zayn understood the Station of the Blessed Beauty and accepted Him as the Manifestation of God unhesitatingly when he heard about the Declaration of the Blessed Beauty.

- Mirza Heydar-Ali, a friend of Jináb-i-Zayn, tells the following story of when he visited Isfahan. “In Isfahan, I spent most of my time in the presence of Zaynu’l-Muqarrabin. We used to go to distant and desolate places far from the tumult of the towns and villages, just to be together, study the Writings, chant prayers, and discuss the Cause of God. These moments of joy kept us alive, but we longed to teach and make His Name known in any way we could. We tried different methods of approach. We went to an Indian who claimed to have some medical knowledge, and Jináb-i-Zayn opened the discussion by saying, “I feel a painful sensation in my heart. I know of no physician who can help me.” “What is the cause?” asked the physician. Jináb-i-Zayn replied, “A few days ago, I was walking in the street when suddenly I beheld a strange sight. Some people, held captive and helpless in the hands of a savage mob, were being tortured and mercilessly persecuted. I was so disturbed and alarmed that, ever since then, I
have felt this pain in my heart." Then Jináb-i-Zayn went on to tell the Indian doctor about the Revelation of the Bab, His tragic history, and His Writings.”

10. Exiled to Mosul

- Zayn moved to Baghdad. In 1868, all Bahá’ís living in Baghdad were arrested and exiled to Mosul. Taherzadeh writes that these “refugees were subjected to severe hardships in Mosul. When they arrived, some of the inhabitants crowded on to the rooftops and threw stones at them. The shopkeepers refused to sell them food and no one would give them shelter. It took a long time for them to settle in Mosul.”

- Mosul is on the path between Iran and ‘Akká and as such, all believers, who had received permission to go on pilgrimage to ‘Akká, travelled via Mosul. These pilgrims, on their way back to Iran, brought gifts such as goods and clothing from Bahá’u’lláh Himself to the friends in Mosul as He wished to alleviate some of the difficulties. Furthermore, the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs greatly assisted with their financial aid. Even with this aid, the friends lived in utter poverty in Mosul.

- Despite the extreme difficulties and the scarcity of funds, the believers in Mosul had strong bonds of friendship and unity. Balyuzi writes that, “the Bahá’ís in Mosul, under the leadership and guidance of Zaynu’l-Muqarrabín, soon became a model Bahá‘í community reflecting something of the spirit of the ‘Akká community.” They were unified. Even if the situation was severely difficult, the stream of Tablets from the Blessed Beauty revealed in their honour, would wash their hearts of all sorrows.

- Mirza Heydar-Ali, passing through Mosul, has recounted that the, “friends in Mosul, together with the person of Zaynu’l-Muqarrabín, made one remember the days spent in Bahá’u’lláh’s holy presence in the holy city of ‘Akká. These believers were living in the utmost unity and harmony. They vied with each other in their efforts and their services. They had no desire except first, to gain the good pleasure of the Blessed Beauty, and secondly, to attain His presence.”

11. A Master Transcribe

- Taherzadeh writes in the first volume of Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh that, “He was meticulous in transcribing the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and took great pains to ensure that they were correctly recorded. Any Tablet in the handwriting of Zaynu’l-Muqarrabín is considered accurate. He has left to posterity, in his exquisite hand, many volumes comprising most of Bahá’u’lláh’s important Tablets; today Bahá‘í publications in Persian and Arabic are authenticated by comparison with these”.
• Jináb-i-Zayn transcribed several volumes of the Holy Writings that he put together and presented as a gift to the Blessed Beauty. Bahá’u’lláh kept these volumes near where He sat and at times, He would use them for recitation when He had visitors. Jináb-i-Zayn also transcribed a copy of “A Travellers Narrative” written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In fact, E.G. Brown received a copy transcribed by Jináb-i-Zayn when he visited Bahjí in 1890.

12. Questions and Answers

• It was Jináb-i-Zayn that was asked to ask any questions regarding the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Bahá’u’lláh says (provisional translation) to Jináb-i-Zayn, “God Willing, you will be covered by the Bounty of God in all the worlds of God. Your questions in My presence are acceptable because mankind will benefit from them, We have especially commanded you to ask questions about the laws and verses of God. We have made you a source of good for the peoples of the world.”

• Taherzadeh explains that he “being a mujtahid and thus highly qualified in the application of Islamic laws, Zaynu’l-Muqarrabín received permission from Bahá’u’lláh to ask any questions he might have regarding the application of the laws revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The answers given by Bahá’u’lláh provide further elucidation and expansion of His laws and this book is regarded as a supplement to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”.

13. In the Presence of the Blessed Beauty

• One day, the Blessed Beauty came down from the Mansion in Bahjí and went to Nahariya with His carriage. Among those present were Jináb-i-Zayn and Mishkin Qalam. When they arrived, a tent was pitched and He remained there from the morning to late afternoon. It was at this time and place that the Blessed Beauty began revealing The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. As for food, the son of Jináb-i-Zayn recounts the following story.

• “A sheep had previously been slaughtered, but all were worried about how they were going to cook and feed those gathered there. Eventually they gave the responsibility for organising the cooking and preparing the food to my father (Jináb-i-Zayn). He called for cooking utensils to be brought from the nearby village and he began to prepare two sorts of kebab. One was the sort known as Husayni, but which from that day on became known as Kabab Zayni, the other Kabab Barg. All of this was done in a spirit of joy and happiness. When it came to eat, a portion of the food was taken to
Bahá'u'lláh and it was said to Him: ‘This is what Zayn has cooked’. He replied: ‘Although it has been some time that I have not partaken of meat, because Zayn has put himself to a lot of trouble, I will take a small portion to eat.’

14. During the Ministry of The Master

- In 1321 (1903), at the age of 88, after being bedridden for about three weeks due to illness, his soul was finally released from this earthly life.

- That the term “sun” hath been applied to the leaders of religion is due to their lofty position, their fame, and renown. Such are the universally recognized divines of every age, who speak with authority, and whose fame is securely established. If they be in the likeness of the Sun of Truth, they will surely be accounted as the most exalted of all luminaries ... [Kitâb-i-Iqân]

15. Closing Prayer