

BAHÁ'IS OF HIGHLAND NEWSLETTER

“O SON OF SPIRIT! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.”

The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, 2

Dear Friends,

Happy Ayyám-i-Há! We are excited to bring to you the 10th issue of our newsletter! We would like to welcome you this month by sharing an excerpt on the world of Habut from [“The Tablet of All Food: The Hierarchy of the Spiritual Worlds and the Metaphoric Nature of Physical Reality”](#) by Jean-Marc Lepain, translated by Peter Terry, *Bahá'í Studies Review* 16 (2010): 43–60. DOI: 10.1386/bsr.16.43/1.

“The world of Habut represents a station in which the essence of God remains unmanifested and totally veiled. On that ontological level, no other being exists but God. His singleness is total, and there is no creature to know Him. It is to this station of Habut that the following words of the prophets apply: “In the beginning was God; there was no creature to know Him” and “The Lord was alone; with no one to adore Him”. The world of Habut is a world outside of time and before any causation. In that world there is no first cause or cause of causes in contrast with the world of time where God has always been a creator and where there was always a creature to know Him. This is why he indicates that these words signify ‘that the habitation wherein the Divine Being dwelleth is far above the reach and ken of any one besides Him’.

Bahá'u'lláh describes this world as the world of ‘He is’ (Huwa), and ‘the Paradise of the Absolute Unicity’ (Abadiyya). It is the *Absconditum* where no intelligence has ever penetrated. One refers to this world as to that of the ‘Hidden Mystery’ or the ‘Primal Point’, for the primal point (*al-nuqta al-awwalyyya*) is the first singularity from which all has proceeded and that

encompasses in itself all the potentialities of existence. It is the One who contains nothing but himself and from whom all the numbers have been engendered. God, in that world, is an unmanifested essence, for the essence manifests itself by attributes, but they are not yet distinct from the essence. The ancient philosophers made reference to this world as the world of the ‘One’.

This passage of the tablet can be related to a commentary that ‘Abdu’l-Baba wrote in 1861, seven years later when he was only 17 years old, on the famous saying (*hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad ‘I was a Hidden Treasure, I desired to be known and for this purpose I brought creation into being’. The first part of this commentary is consecrated to the station of the Hidden Treasure which Bahá'u'lláh has clearly identified with the world of Habut. ‘Abdu’l-Baba explains that the station of the Hidden Treasure represents the invisible level of the divine essence in its most absolute unicity. To speak of this station philosophers and theologians of the past have used multiple terms each more obscure than the other, such as ‘the hidden identity’ (*ghayb al-huwiyya*), ‘the pure Unicity’ (*sarf al-*

abadiyya), 'the Occultation of occultations' (*ghayb al-ghayyub*), 'the unknown Absolute', 'the inaccessible to all qualification' (*mahjul al-na'at*), or 'the inaccessible to consciousness' (*munqat'a al-wujdan*) and others besides. As 'Abdu'l-Baha remarks, the diversity of these expressions is in itself an indication of the perplexity of the human mind when dealing with such questions. The only thing that can be affirmed with certitude about this station is that the divine essence is inaccessible to human intelligence and is above all comparisons and all metaphors generally used to describe it. 'Abdu'l-Baha, however, takes on one of the images employed in this literature to make his point. He writes that the only way to represent the divine essence consists in imagining a point and considering how in the point are hidden all the letters and all the words (in the writing of Arabic the point is an essential element which gives value to the letter), without being able to find in the point any trace of their ipseity (*huniyyat*), and also without being able to establish the least distinction between them.

Hence, when we consider the divine essence on the ontological level of *Habut*, we can see that the names, the attributes and the essential potentialities (*sbu'unat-i dhatiyyih*) are in a state of non-existence. It is for this very reason that we refer to that essence as a 'Hidden Treasure'. For even though, on this ontological level, nothing is manifested, nevertheless it is from the non-manifested potentialities of this essence that the existence of all things is derived. 'Abdu'l-Baha then uses another image that is also a common feature of this metaphysic of Being, the image of the number One (*Ahad*), which contains in itself all the numbers. Without the concept of the number One, other numbers could not exist. Therefore it is possible to consider that the number One is responsible for engendering all the other numbers and that all the numbers are contained in the One without, of course, finding in the One the least trace of these numbers. In this manner, the character of absolute transcendence of the divine essence is preserved. Baha'u'llah says, speaking of this station: 'The door of the knowledge of the Ancient Being hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, closed in the face of men.'



Finally, the Hidden Treasure retains its mystery, for, contrary to what the majority of the thinkers and philosophers of the past have said, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha do not identify the Primal Point or the One with the divine essence. For them, such expressions should be considered at best as images (*tamthul*) or mental representations (*tasannurat*) used only to facilitate our comprehension. In one of his tablets, Baha'u'llah affirms that it is false to speak of God as One for that introduces already a sign of quantity, and God is above all numbers and all quantity. It is a clear repudiation of the past doctrines of such philosophers as Plotinus and Neoplatonists who said that God is the One or that the One is God, or Muslim Platonists or 'Isma'ih philosophers such as Nasiru'd-Din Tasi, Nasir-i Khusraw or the School of the Brothers of Purity (*Ikhwan al-safa*), who were to influence all subsequent philosophy in Persia and for whom either God created the One as the first emanation of Himself and as the agent of the creation of all things or the One is the first hypostasis which emanates from God and which engenders in its turn the hypostases of intelligence (*'aql*) and of the soul (*nafs*). In the Baha'i writings, all references to the Point or to the One are but a convenience of language.

Announcements

- [ISGP Brochure](#)
- [Bahá'í World Centre Staffing Needs](#)
- [Cruise to Chilean Temple](#)
- [Toward Oneness](#)

Letters/Communications

- **National Spiritual Assembly**
 - [2017 Annual Ridván Election](#)
 - [Feast of Álá'](#)
 - [Feast of Mulk](#)
 - [Passing of Mr. Fred Schechter](#)
 - [Cover Letter addressed to the American Bahá'í Community](#)
 - [ISGP Undergraduate Seminars](#)
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 - [America and the Five Year Plan](#)
- **Universal House of Justice**
 - [Passing of Mr. Fred Schechter](#)

Talks/Presentations/Web

- [Web Talk # 21 | A Divine Proclamation Like No Other: Baha'u'llah's Suratu 'I-Muluk Part 1](#)
- [The Roots of the Baha'i Faith: The Bab and Baha'u'llah](#)
- [The Roots of the Bahá'í Faith, Part 2](#)
- [Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'í Faith, Part 1](#)
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- [Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'í Faith, Part 5](#)
- [O Lord, I am a Child](#)

Links

- [Bahá'is of Banning](#)
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Bahá'is of Highland

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