

# BAHÁ'IS OF HIGHLAND NEWSLETTER

**"O SON OF SPIRIT! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting."**

## The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, 1

Dear Friends,

We are excited to bring to you the 14<sup>th</sup> issue of our newsletter! This month we will continue the description of the worlds of God we started discussing in the previous issues of our newsletter. So far we have discussed the worlds of Habut, Labut, and Jabarūt. The next world to discuss is the world of Malakūt. The following excerpt is taken 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 Malakūt, which is situated below Jabarut, is the angelic kingdom of those souls to whom God has revealed Himself in the splendour of His 'greatest manifestation' (*al-maẓhar al-akbar*). In the Tablet to Varqa Bahá'u'llah has given us a striking description of this world. He explains that the term Malakūt covers two significances. The first concerns the Manifestation and the second 'the world of images' (*alam al-mithal*) which is an intermediary world between Jabarut and the human world of mortality (Nasut), between 'the heavens' and 'the earth'. In the Muslim tradition, Malakūt is the angelical world, the world of angels (*malak*). It is also through that world that holy men receive visions.



However in the Bahá'í writings, the word Malakūt has a completely different function. Malakūt is a dimension of the contingent universe (*alam al-mumkinat*). It is in Malakūt that the soul resides, for the soul is an essence (*jawhar*) and essences never leave the world of essences. The soul cannot incarnate itself in matter; it can only reflect itself in matter just

as the light reflects in a mirror. Therefore it can be said that all human beings have a Malakūtian dimension. We are all part of the physical world (Nasut) as well as of the spiritual world (Malakūt). It is the soul that communicates with the divine worlds, and consequently everything that comes from those worlds, such as the grace of God and His inspiration, must pass through Malakūt to reach humanity. This explains the intermediate character of the world of Malakūt. Bahá'u'llah explains that when the Word of God descends from the world of Labut towards humanity, it passes into the world of Jabarut where it is made manifest, this constituting the first step of 'substantiation' (*taqyid*). When the Word descends to the level of Malakūt, it confers upon those who dwell therein the blessings of the power coming from the superior levels. The world of Malakūt has great importance for humans because it is the only spiritual world of which we can form a feeble mental representation. The physical world itself, the world of Nasut, is but an emanation of Malakūt which encompasses it totally. As such, Malakūt has sometimes been termed the 'world of images' in a way that is not without resemblance to the platonic world of ideas, although Bahá'í metaphysics is certainly not Platonist. Bahá'u'llah tells us that the world of humanity (Nasut) is but a metaphorical image of Malakūt. Malakūt is the destiny, the finality of human beings. It is the spiritual world par excellence, 'the Kingdom of Abba', the world of souls, where, beyond physical death, human beings pursue their spiritual development in their infinite voyage towards God. Bahá'u'llah tells us that the world of Malakūt is itself hierarchized according to the degree of spiritual development of the souls therein. At the summit of Malakūt is found 'the celestial Arc', 'the Crimson Ark' upon which sail the souls of the prophets, the martyrs and

the saints who form 'the Supreme Concourse' (Mala-yi A'la), 'the angelic troops', 'the Celestial Assembly', ready at every moment to come to the rescue of those who arise to uphold the Cause of God. After leaving their physical bodies the souls of the departed continue their existence in the Malakut according

### **The metaphorical character of Malakut**

When human beings pursue their spiritual development in the world of Nasut, they do so by means of actions such as helping and serving their fellow human beings, sacrificing their comfort in order to accomplish noble and altruistic tasks, contributing from their means to the support of religion, augmenting their love for others through philanthropic acts, developing their spiritual comprehension by associating with pure and detached persons, daily recitation and reading of the revealed Word, and promoting and promulgating the teachings of their faith. These actions, Baba'u'llah tells us, contribute to the spiritual development of human beings because they are the symbolic representations, one could say the 'images', of the functions of the soul in Malakut. Our life in this world, the world of Nasut, is then a metaphorical image of what our life will be like in the other world, the world of Malakut. In this world, human beings exercise and develop their spiritual functions, which in the next world will become the equivalent of the physical senses in this world, permitting them to live a new existence conforming to the spiritual nature of the disembodied soul. If the soul fails to develop its spiritual qualities in this world, it will not grow and it will enter the Kingdom in a state of spiritual atrophy that will render its existence in Malakut similar to that of the blind and the deaf upon this earth. As for those who will have developed their spiritual qualities, these will become new senses for them by which they will breathe 'the celestial breezes', will hear the 'divine melodies', and will contemplate meta-physical landscapes that will cheer them in their deepest selves. The quality of the world of humanity (Nasut) as a metaphorical reflection or image of Malakut is illustrated by an anecdote told by 'Abdu'l-Baha in his book *Memorials of the Faithful (Tadhkirat al-Wafa)*. In this book, he tells us of the life and death of 74 of the close companions of Baba'u'llah. In the chapter consecrated to Mulla 'Ali-Akbar, who was named by Baba'u'llah a 'Hand of the Cause of God', and who played a very significant role in the propagation of the Baba'i teachings, 'Abdu'l-Baha describes a dream that he had some years after the death of this individual:

**One night, not long ago, I saw him in the world of dreams. Although his frame had always been massive, in the dream world he appeared larger and more corpulent than ever. It seemed as if he had returned from a journey. I said to him, 'Jinab, you have grown good and stout.' 'Yes,' he**

to the station they have reached by their spiritual development during their earthly life. Souls are conscious of the plight of other souls that have not reached the same degree of development but they are unable to understand adequately the bliss of the souls who live in higher stations.

**answered, 'praise be to God! I have been in places where the air was fresh and sweet, and the water crystal pure; the landscapes were beautiful to look upon, the foods delectable. It all agreed with me, of course, so I am stronger than ever now, and I have recovered the zest of my early youth. The breaths of the All-Merciful blew over me and all my time was spent in telling of God. I have been setting forth His proofs, and teaching His Faith.**



'Abdu'l-Baha added this particularly significant commentary: 'The meaning of teaching the Faith in the next world is spreading the sweet savours of holiness; that action is the same as teaching.' This short text teaches us two things. The first is that the most important actions of our terrestrial life such as loving one's fellows, propagating the divine teachings, giving and receiving unselfishly, all have a counterpart in Malakut and should be regarded as the symbolic expressions of the life of the soul in the divine Kingdom. The second is that as long as human beings inhabit this physical world, they can neither comprehend nor directly express the realities of the spiritual world. As long as they are prisoners of this world, their intelligence cannot understand these realities and no human language can describe them. All it can do, at the very best, is to have a vague intuition of their reality. Poetic language is the only way to mediate this communicational impossibility, and recourse to metaphors based upon this sensible world is therefore inevitable.

However, these metaphors are not simple poetic artifices. They contain a portion of the spiritual truth that goes beyond the limitation of words. Thus, in this story of 'Abdu'l-Baha we

*must understand that the pleasures of our physical senses, such as smelling a perfume, contemplating a landscape, savouring a delicious meal, are the terrestrial images of the life of the soul in Malakut. To go beyond that in the comprehension of this mystery seems to be impossible. Nevertheless, for those who possess spiritual comprehension, meditation upon this natural world allows some degree of intuitive understanding of the spiritual world.*

## ***Announcements***

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- [Bicentennial Guidance](#)
- [New National Fund goal for this year](#)
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## ***Letters/Communications***

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  - [Arab American Conference Reminder](#)

## ***Talks/Presentations/Web***

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- [Building a New Civilization](#)
- [Michael Penn | Mind & Development Baha'í- Inspired Reflections](#)

## ***Links***

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