

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 15 September 2003

From: Research Department

Additional References Regarding Repetition of the Greatest Name Ninety-five Times a Day

The Research Department has studied the query raised by Dr. ... in his email message of 14 May 2003 to the Bahá'í World Centre. Dr. ... explains that he has conducted a preliminary search of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings and other references on the subject of the repetition of the Greatest Name ninety-five times a day. He appends a list of citations he has located, and explains that he has not found any additional insights or commentaries on "the law that brings 'spiritual enrichment' to our souls 'by this simple act of worshipful meditation'". He asks whether any additional references or materials are available on this law. We provide the following response.

Dr. ... is no doubt aware from a perusal of the Synopsis and Codification section of the "Kitáb-i-Aqdas", that the "Repetition of the Greatest Name 95 times a day" is listed as one of the "Miscellaneous Laws and Ordinances".¹

He has already referred to paragraph 18 in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas,² a segment of which reads:

It hath been ordained that every believer in God, the Lord of Judgement, shall, each day, having washed his hands and then his face, seat himself and, turning unto God, repeat "Alláh-u-Abhá" ninety-five times.

We bring to Dr. ...'s attention note 33 of "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas",³ which refers to paragraph 18 and provides the following elucidation regarding the significance of the Greatest Name in relation to Bahá'u'lláh:

"Alláh-u-Abhá" is an Arabic Phrase meaning "God the All Glorious." It is a form of the Greatest Name of God.... In Islám there is a tradition that among the many names of God, one was the greatest; however, the identity of this Greatest Name was hidden. Bahá'u'lláh has confirmed that the Greatest Name is "Bahá".

The various derivatives of the word "Bahá" are also regarded as the Greatest Name. Shoghi Effendi's secretary writing on his behalf explains that:

¹ "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993, 2003 printing), pp. 156–157.

² When reference is to the Book revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the title is written in Roman letters. When the words "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas" appear in italics or quotation marks, the reference is to the publication "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book", which includes the Questions and Answers, supplementary Tablets, copious notes and other material.

³ Ibid., pp. 181–182.

The Greatest Name is the Name of Bahá'u'lláh. "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá" is an invocation meaning: "O Thou Glory of Glories!" "Alláh-u-Abhá" is a greeting which means: "God the All-Glorious." Both refer to Bahá'u'lláh. By Greatest Name is meant that Bahá'u'lláh has appeared in God's Greatest Name, in other words, that He is the supreme Manifestation of God.

The greeting "Alláh-u-Abhá" was adopted during the period of Bahá'u'lláh's exile in Adrianople.

The repetition of "Alláh-u-Abhá" ninety-five times is to be preceded by the performance of ablutions....

The following excerpt from note 34 of "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas"⁴ explains ablutions as associated with the daily recitation of the Greatest Name ninety-five times:

Ablutions are specifically associated with certain prayers. They must precede the offering of the three Obligatory Prayers, the daily recitation of "Alláh-u-Abhá" ninety-five times, and the recital of the verse prescribed as an alternative to obligatory prayer and fasting for women in their courses....

We attach for Dr. ...'s study a letter dated 28 December 1999 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, in which the laws which pertain to obligatory prayer, fasting and recitation of the Greatest Name ninety-five times a day were made universally applicable. In that letter the House of Justice expounds the potency of these laws and their influence both on the individual and the community. The letter states:

We have determined, therefore, that it is imperative for all the believers to deepen their awareness of the blessings conferred by the laws which directly foster the devotional life of the individual and, thus, of the community. The essentials of these laws are known to all Bahá'ís, but acquiring greater insight into their significance must include carrying out all the divinely revealed aspects of their observance. These are the laws which pertain to obligatory prayer, fasting and recitation of the Greatest Name ninety-five times a day.

Bahá'u'lláh asserts: "One who performeth neither good deeds nor acts of worship is like unto a tree which beareth no fruit, and an action which leaveth no trace. Whosoever experienceth the holy ecstasy of worship will refuse to barter such an act or any praise of God for all that existeth in the world. Fasting and obligatory prayer are as two wings to man's life. Blessed be the one who soareth with their aid in the heaven of the love of God, the Lord of all worlds."

Regarding how the Greatest Name is to be repeated, it might interest Dr. ... to know that in a letter of 19 October 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, the significance of a spiritual principle is elucidated, namely, that "mere mechanical repetition of

⁴ Ibid., p. 182.

the syllables is not referred to” and that the “utterance of the word must be accompanied by the turning of the heart to God”. The letter states:

You ask for an explanation of the passage: “The mention of the Name of Bahá’u’lláh is the cause of the happiness of the hearts and whosoever utters that Word creates spiritual Beatitude, but it cannot be given as a name to any soul.” Of course by the phrase “mention of the Name of Bahá’u’lláh” mere mechanical repetition of the syllables is not referred to. The utterance of the word must be accompanied by the turning of the heart to God. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá once said: “The worshipper must pray with a detached spirit, unconditional surrender of the will, concentrated attention and spiritual fervour ... AUTOMATIC, FORMAL PRAYERS WHICH DO NOT TOUCH THE CORE OF THE HEART ARE OF NO AVAIL.” When we turn to God with our whole heart and invoke His Name, a spiritual connection is established through which we become a channel of divine influence.

We also bring to Dr....’s attention the following extract from a letter written on behalf of the House of Justice that attests to the spiritual power of the Greatest Name and the protection it affords in times of difficulties:

As a devoted believer in Bahá’u’lláh, you have the privilege of using the Greatest Name and the revealed prayers to draw on the power of the Holy Spirit, which is your shield and your protection through any difficulties and which will bring reassurance and serenity to your heart.

(4 January 1991, to an individual believer)

Attachment