

Course of Bahá'í Symbolism

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English version: Patricio J. Cernadas

Introduction

An in-depth study of Bahá'í symbolism is yet to be accomplished. The present course barely attempts to develop an elementary introduction to this topic. In his prologue to *Hidden Words*, George Townshend, the Hand of the Cause, wrote about the present constrictions imposed by this type of intellectual endeavors:

“We, the ones from the spiritual twilight, the ones who still linger in the darkest side, the ones who have inherited the General Tradition of the Doubt and the Adoration of the Golden Calf, cannot penetrate into the deepest meaning of these occult words, nor grasp the perspective of Life and the Universe that they render. Years and generations are yet to come until men get to shed the shackles which have constrained their souls, and retrieve the lost discernment that they have not used for a long while.”

Here I will merely try to describe the symbolic forms in the sacred writings and the Bahá'í architectural systems, and I will compare them to analogous forms in the universal religious symbolism. There are great similarities, but also great differences. For example the Bahá'í lotus as a tree or a flower, which appears in texts and temples. Although it is similar to the Hindu lotus, there are some differences not easy to render in detail. Something similar can be found in the seven circles of Mount Carmel, a symbol shared with the Catholic Carmelites.

This course will start with the system of Mount Carmel, which includes the Bahá'í Sacred Geography. Lessons 2 and 3 will enhance the analysis of the discussed points.

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Lesson 1

Mount Carmel and the Bahá'í Sacred Geography

According to noteworthy scholars such as Mircea Eliade and René Guénon, the structure called “World Centre” is essential to the symbolism of several religions. This structure, which defines the Sacred Space and Time, represents both an ideal geography and a calendar relying on its most comprehensive forms.

The Bahá'í System of Mount Carmel shows multiple elements which can help us frame it within this religious morphology. Lesson 1 will briefly discuss its basic features:

- 1) The Centre or Point and World Storeys
- 2) The Sacred Mountain
- 3) The Terraces and the World Axis
- 4) The Cave
- 5) The Tree of the World
- 6) The Garden of Paradise
- 7) The Temple and Heavenly Jerusalem
- 8) The Arch and the Ark
- 9) The House of Justice
- 10) Angels and Guardians in Holy Land

The Centre or Point and the World Circles

The Perfect Man, the Prophet or the Saint, is the central point on which the whole symbolic system revolves. It determines the measurement of Time (Calendar) and Space (Temple and Sacred Geography).

The Point, which is considered as the origin of all realities, has similar representations in several symbolic systems.

The Supreme Point in Hebrew Kabbalah, the Bindu Point in Hinduism and the Primordial Point in the Islam, mentioned by the Imam Ali: “*I am the Point ...*” represent the same Point which was contemplated by Dante in his vision of Paradise: “*The end point of the axis on which the first wheel revolves... Heaven and Nature rely on that point.*”².

The ascent to the sacred mountain in different religions means the pilgrimage, which is aimed to that Point.

The symbolism of the Point is equivalent to that of the Seed or the Grain of mustard mentioned in the Godspell parable, to the Hindu Seminal Drop, to the Sacred Letter or Syllable. The idea is the same: the origin is seminally contained in the Whole.

The Báb, the “*Nuqtiyiulá*” or “*Primordial Point*”; “*from which have been generated all created things*”; the one “*who setteth the measure assigned to each and every thing*”³; this one, according to Abdu'l-Bahá, is the cane or rod for measuring the temple: “*This reed is a Perfect Man*”⁴.

² Dante, *Divina Comedia, Paraíso*, XIII, 11 y XXVIII, 41 (English translation: PJC)

³ *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/tb/>)

⁴ Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/>)



Yantra, Seed – Primordial Sound



Letter Ba and diacritical point

The Bahá'í Symbolic Geography, centered on the Primordial Point, associated to number 9 and numeric manifestation of Bahá, the Greatest Name, is described by the Guardian:

“The pilgrims were approaching the Sacred Remains of Báb across nine concentric circles:

1° The farthest was the planet itself;

2° Next came Holy Land, the heart of the world;

3° Inside that circle was Mount Carmel, the Mountain of God;

4° Next was the following point of access to the surroundings to the Sepulchre;

5° After that, the Holy Court, bordering the Sanctuary;

6° The outward Sanctuary, Báb Mausoleum, the Shell containing the Pearl;

7° The Sanctum Sanctorum, the Pearl of Greatest Value;

8° Inside the Sanctum Sanctorum, the Tabernacle, the crypt holding the Saintest Coffin;

9° Inside the crypt, the Coffin in which Báb's Most Sacred Remains rest"⁵.

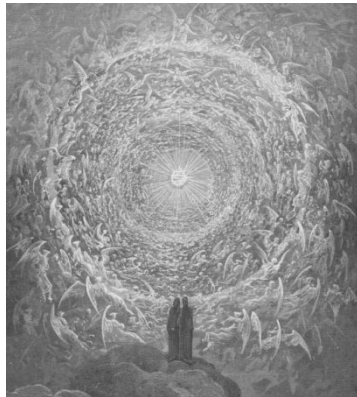
This system for symbolic division of space in nine circles has been employed by numerous cultures.

In his narrative about Scypion's visionary dream, Cicero writes:

*"Can you contemplate the glorious temples where you have arrived? Now you know that the Universe comprises nine circles"*⁶.

Dante introduces a similar structure in *Divine Comedy*, Paradise, Canto XXVIII, where there are *"nine orders of glorious angels on the Ninth Heaven whose centre is the point upon which Heaven and Nature depend"*.

The existence of spatial structures based on nine basic divisions (concentric circles, grids, trees, stairs, patterns which are ultimately equivalent) can be recognized in various cultures (Aztec, Christian, Dogon, Egyptian, Slave, Hindu, Jewish, Kogis, Lulua, Mandan, Maya, Mongol, Muslim, Roman, Sabeans, Sioux, Yakut, Zoroastrian, etc.). Moreover, the concept of universe, temple, city, dwelling and human body in some sociocultural systems seem to respond to a pattern, a matrix which establishes similar measurements among these spatial dominions.



Dante's Nine Storeys



Scipio's Circles

⁵ Rúhíyyih Rabbani, *La perla inapreciable*, Pág. 293, Editorial Bahá'í, Argentina, 1973, (English translation: PJC)

⁶ Cicerón, *El Sueño de Escipión*, Pág. 30, Editorial EDAF, España, 1984 (English translation: PJC)

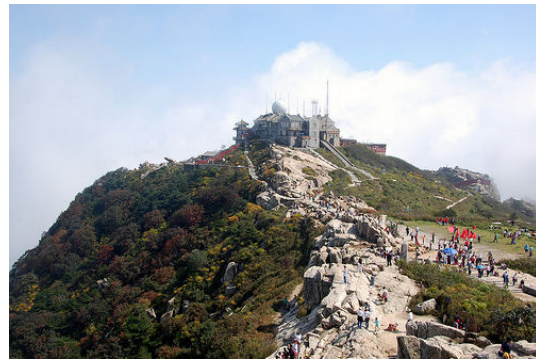
The Sacred Mountain

The destination of the Ascent to the Mountain, or Pilgrimage Act, is the Point.

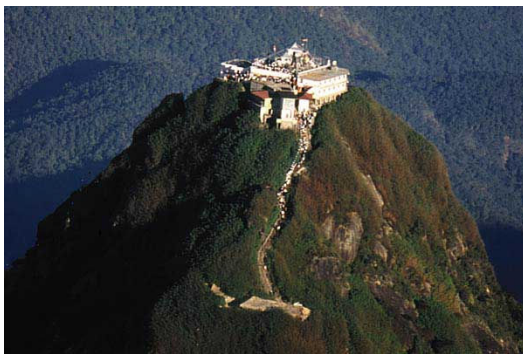
The Indian Mount Meru, the Zoroastrian Harā Berezaitī, the Chinese Mount Tai, the Irish Mount Log, the Christian Golgotha, and the Hebrew Mount Sinai are some examples of the same structure in different traditions.



Mount Tabor



Mount Tai



Mount Sri Pada



Mount Athos

The Cosmic Mountain, through which the axis of the world runs, is generally associated with the structures of the seven circles or storeys: the

Zoroastrian Ziggurats, the Dantesque Purgatory Mountain and the Mystic Mountain of Saint John of the Cross, who not only shares the Bahá'í conception of the Seven Circles but also Mount Carmel, serve as examples.



Mount of the Seven Circles – Dante



Mount Carmel – Saint John of the Cross

Mount Carmel is traditionally associated with Pythagoras, who, according to the legend, passed the night over there. Jamblicus in *Life of Pythagoras* refers to the mountain as:

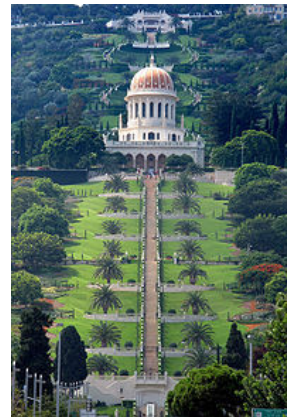
“The most sacred of all mountains, only accesible for the chosen ones”⁷.

⁷ *Jamblichus' life of Pythagoras*, Pág. 8 , J. M. Watkins, London, 1818

The Terraces and the Axis of the World

The mountain, which symbolically occupies the centre of the world, presents a series of stages, steps or terraces to be climbed. This staircase is equivalent to the axis upon which the world revolves and also goes through the Central Point and the Generator of the System.

According to Muslim tradition, Mohammed contemplated a stairway on which the righteous climb to God; and a similar pattern can be observed in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, John of the Cross' *Ascent to Mount Carmel* and *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by John Climacus, who was the abbot to the Monastery of Saint Catherine of Mount Sinai.



Terraces Mount Jiuhua and Mount Carmel



Ladder to Paradise– John Calimacus



Ascent of Intellect - Ram3n Llull

The Bahá'í symbolic geography bestows Mount Carmel a versatile structure. Apart from the Seven and the Nine circles, the Mountain presents Nineteen Terraces or Storeys.

The forerunner to this nineteen-storey mountain is the Arabian mythic Mount Qâf, which belongs in the symbolic geography of the Arabian Nights. In his classic study of this Arabian classic, Michelle Gall states that:

*“Mount Qâf (...) is merely the outstanding summit of a notable system, below which there are 19 storeys”*⁸.

Another symbolic motif associating Mount Qâf with Mount Carmel is the fact that in both sites the Simurgh, the Sovereign of all Birds, made its nest, according to Bahá'u'lláh's writings.



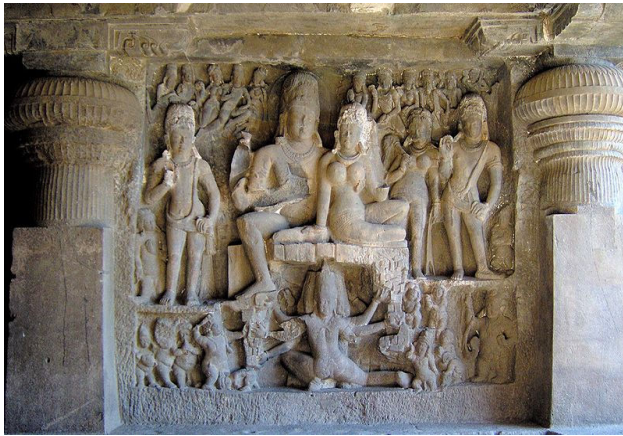
The Simurgh and the Mountain

⁸ Michell Gall, *El secreto de las mil y una noches*, pág 82, Editorial Plaza y Janés. Barcelona, 1975. (English translation: PJC)

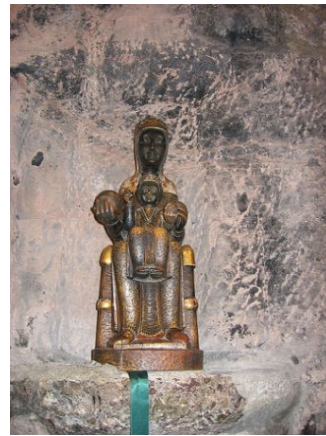
The Cave

The symbolism of the mountain and the cave are related. Ascending the mountain on storeys and terraces and descending into the cave are equivalent. Due to the phonetic equivalence to the word *kahf* (cave), Guénon associates the name of the Sacred Mountain with the cavern. This appears on several occasions as a symmetric structure which is supplementary to the mountain. Mount Carmel and Eliah's Cave are symbolically congruent. As a sepulchre, Báb's Sanctuary holds the symbolism of the cave.

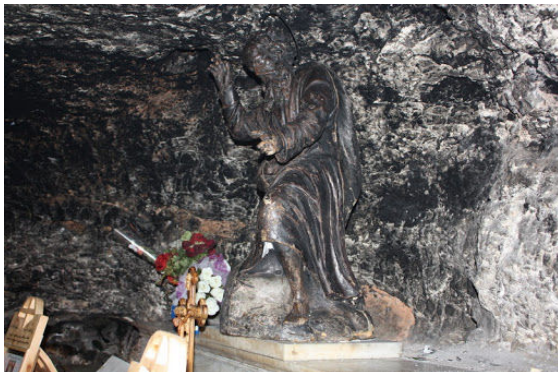
The Indian Mount Kailāsh, Mount Montserrat and Mount Zaur (Mohammed's refuge) represent the same symbolic system with their revered caverns.



Cave and Mountain, Shiva y Parvati



Madonna of Montserrat Cave



Eliah's Cave, Mount Carmel



Mohammed and Hira Cave

The Tree of the World

The Indian Evergreen Fig Tree, the Cabalistic Tree of Life or the Tree of Being of Ibn Arabí imply the same conception: the tree is the symbolic form of the Man and the Universe.

In *The Seven Valleys* Bahá'u'lláh mentions “*the boughs of the tree of thy being*” and “*the branches of the rosetree of existence*” as well as those who “*dwell within the shadow of the tree of knowledge*”. In other writings, he refers to *Anísá*, the Tree of Life.

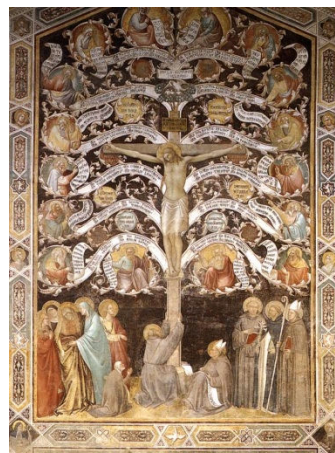
Gaston Bachelard, a French philosopher, has written:

*“Imagination is a tree. It possesses the integrating virtues of a tree. It is all roots and sprouts. It lives between the soil and the sky. It lives in the soil and the wind. The envisioned tree imperceptibly becomes the cosmological tree, the epitome of a universe generating another universe.”*⁹

The Tree of the World represents the three-folded structure shared by the Macrocosm and Microcosm. In the centre of the Cross comprising the cardinal points, the Aurean Man spreads his arms; Christ on the Tree of Cross, the Báb in the centre of the Nine Atoreys of Mount Carmel or the god Odin sacrificed on Ygg-drasil, which is a Cosmic tree covering the Nine Worlds, respond to a similar structure.



Ygg-drasil, Nordic Cosmic Tree



Tree of the Cross

⁹ Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie* (Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, Inc, 2005), Pág. 85.



Bahá'ú'lláh Seals



Candlestick of Nine Arms

The Chinese upright club (*Kien mu*) in which the three cosmic zones criss-cross, the Oglala Sioux club in full bloom standing in the centre of the circle of their nation and the gigantic corn plantation of the Navajos in New Mexico reminisce the same pattern.

The Persian Bayan says: “*The meaning of Resurrection Day is the day of the Apparition of the Tree of Reality.*”

Abdu'l-Bahá has declared:

“*One of the things which has appeared in the world of existence, and which is one of the requirements of Nature, is human life. Considered from this point of view man is the branch; nature is the root. Then can the will and the intelligence, and the perfections which exist in the branch, be absent in the root?*”¹⁰.

“*The tree of life is the highest degree of the world of existence: the position of the Word of God, and the supreme Manifestation*”¹¹.

The Bahá'ís writings mention the symbol of manifestation of God on His Day: the *Sadratu'l-Muntahá*, the “*tree behind which men or angels cannot tread*”; it was a tree that Arabians supposedly planted as a milestone at the

¹⁰ Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/>)

¹¹ *Ibíd.* (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/>)

end of a road. Sometimes it is called the Divine or Sacred Lotus Tree. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are sometimes called “The Twin Lotus Trees”.

The Bahá'í Lotus Tree has a forerunner on the Tree of the Cross, Báb's text makes a point quite clear. *“Great is the blessedness of those whose blood Thou hast chosen wherewith to water the Tree of Thine affirmation, and thus to exalt Thy holy and immutable Word.”*¹²

The Garden of Paradise

*“O MY FRIENDS! Have ye forgotten that true and radiant morn, when in those hallowed and blessed surroundings ye were all gathered in My presence beneath the shade of the tree of life, which is planted in the all-glorious paradise?”*¹³

The representation of the transcendental world by a sacred garden and a sacred botany is shared by many traditions.

For example, the Classical Chinese Garden symbolizes the Terrestrial Paradise which, according to Chinese legends, stood on the top of a mountain and guarded the Elixir of Immortality. The resemblance to the Garden in the Biblical Eden is evident.

Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a seed and requests his disciples to imitate the wild irides in the wilderness. The Hebrew origin of the term “Nazaren” is “Natzar”, which means “branch”, “sprout”, “stem”, “shoot”, and “bough”.

¹² *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/tb/>)

¹³ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, Part II, From the Persian, 19. (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/>)

In Bahá'í simbology, seed, tree, branch, leaf, fruit and flower are sacred titles; Báb is “Sacred Seed”, Bahíyyih Khánúm, “the Saintest of all Leaves”, the Guardian, “the First Bough from the Divine and Sacred Lotus Tree”.

Abdu'l-Bahá has declared that Isaiah's prophecy (“*a cane will shoot from Isai's trunk, and a stem from its roots*”) is fulfilled in Bahá'u'lláh. He also calls his Father “Majestic Bough”, “Matchless Bough” and “Divine Bough”.

The Garden Archetype is of singular importance in the Bahá'í Sacred Space and Time Conceptions. The gathering of Badasht with 81 (9x9) attendees receiving 81 brand new names. Among them is Bahá (= 9), whose bearer is The One Who bestow Names. Bahá'u'lláh is a pattern of The Greatest Name, which is in turn established by a human assembly and a Garden, the *Ridván*.

The Garden is a fundamental location in the Carmel system. Bab's Sanctuary is a flower and a garden altogether, included in a bigger garden that replicates its structure. It is also a twin flower which opens in Bahjí, the Rose of Sharon.

The greatest of all venues, the Bahjí Sanctuary is the core of a garden whose farthest storey is framed by 95 (19x5) columns, a structure related to the Greatest Name and the number of daily invocations of the name derived from Bahá, *Alláh-u-Abhá*.

There is a correspondence between the floral angels of Zoroastrianism and the Letters of the Living; they have configured the sacred time and space; they are the constituents of the Archetypal World and the forms of the Divine Manifestation.

The ancient Zoroastrian Floral Metaphysics reappears in the Guardian Gardens. In the Mazda Angelology, every day of the calendar is named after the angel to whom it is dedicated; there is a related symbol of a flower, which represents their heavenly figure and the scheme of their power.

According to Indian tradition, the Lotus represents the centre of the world holding Mount Merú (associated with numbers five, seven and nine), and in turn it is represented by the Báb Mausoleum.

The sanctuary can be viewed as a Lotus Tree with eighteen branches shooting a floral crown of thirty-six elements, which in turn give rise to seventy-two petals and eventually the one hundred-forty-four points signaled on the cylinder, a symbolic number of the Heavenly Jerusalem.



72 leaves of the Lotus Tree and 144 pearls

Heavenly Jerusalem or archetypal temple

*“Thus have We built the Temple with the hands of power and might, could ye but know it. This is the Temple promised unto you in the Book”
Bahá'u'lláh¹⁴*

The Báb sanctuary, which keeps the traditional symbolism of the Heavenly Jerusalem responds to the same sacrificial motif of Indian and Christian Cosmologies. It contains “the Perfect Man”, “the Gate of Heaven” and “the Primordial Victim” whose sacrifice is the origin of the world.

The architectural form of the Báb Sanctuary is the Classic Muslim Qubbah, a structure composed by a base of square section crowned by a dome; a mausoleum for keeping sacred relics. It is a work of art relying on a traditional neoplatonic conception in which art represents knowledge reflecting the ideas or the eternal reason of things.

The original meaning of the word Qubbah is “bedroom”, probably because the relics represent the wedding between Heaven and Earth, between

14 Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/se/>)

the Beloved. According to the Guardian, the Sanctuary is “Carmel Queen” and the Bahjí Sanctuary is Her Spouse and King.

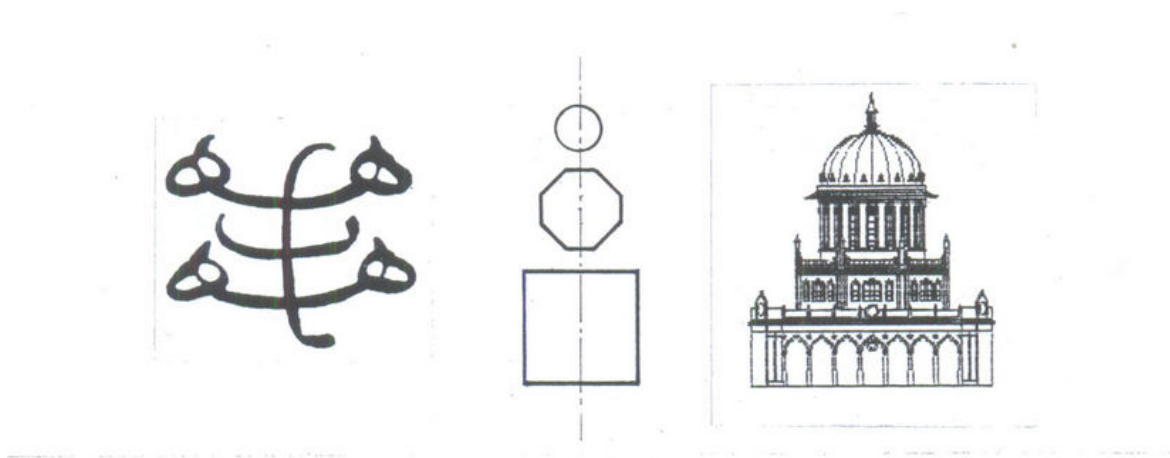
The Indian Vastu-Purusha-Mandala and that one formed by Zoroaster and his eighty disciples are among the structures of eighty-one elements mentioned by Firdausí in the *Sháhnáma*. Both of them are of sacrificial nature, a feature shared with the implicit mandala in the Bahá’í sanctuary of Carmel.

The building presents three sections clearly acknowledged, the three successive crowns mentioned by the Guardian:

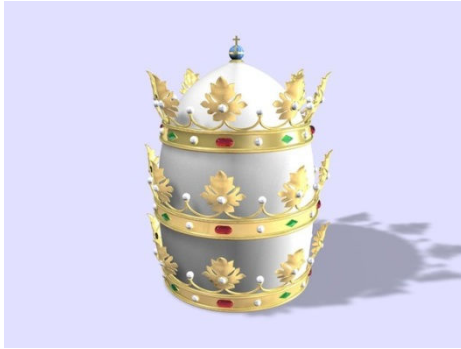
- 1) Circular
- 2) Octogonal
- 3) Square

We think that these three crowns correspond to the conception of the triad of world which has been defined by Abdu’l- Bahá and represented in the emblem of the Greatest Name.

The three worlds are sketched in the Sanctuary according to the following illustration:



The symbol of the “triple crown” is equivalent to the “*Triregnum*” of the Papal Tiara, formed by three crowns symbolizing the triple power of the Pope: Father of Kings, Governor of the World and Vicar of Christ.



Triple Papal Crown



Triple Egyptian Crown

René Guénon has provided a precise description of this structure in the realm of Sacred Architecture:

“...Common to most traditions are the buildings that are composed by a base of square section crowned by a dome or a dome which is usually hemispherical.

The building represents the fulfillment of a cosmic model, the whole structure. If it were reduced exclusively to those two parts, it would be incomplete, as in the juxtaposition of the “Three Worlds” there would be an element amiss belonging to the Intermediate World. In fact, this element also exists because the dome or the circular cupola cannot rest directly on a square base, and a kind of transition is needed so that it could fall in place, a kind of in-between section or form which is generally that of the octagon.”¹⁵

According to my criterion, the Báb Sanctuary represents the geometric-numerical of the Greatest Name, the fundamental Archetype of Bahá’í faith, defining both its sacred history and its institutions, such as its spatial symbolic system (Nine Circles of the World) and time symbolic system (calendar of 19 x 19). Archetypal Time and Space blend in a unique structure in a sacred space-time, the Divine Name: Bahá.

The Sanctuary symbolizes the Bahá’í cosmology and the community of martyrs and founders (nineteen Letters of the Living and three hundred-sixty-one first members).

It represents the Mystic Earth *Hurqalya*, Intermediate or Prophetic World. Its place in the terrace system is precisely the Intermediate.

¹⁵ René Guénon, *Símbolos fundamentales de la ciencia Sagrada*, pág 234, Editorial Eudeba, Argentina, 1962. (English translation: PJC)

The Arch and the Ark

They stand for the union of Heaven and Earth, the Pontiff or Bridge between the Worlds. In the biblical story, the rainbow is related to Noah's Ark, which is also related to the Ark of the Alliance. All these symbols are in turn linked to the typical structure of the mountain.

When he was imprisoned in Mount Máh-Kú, the Báb referred to his cell as "the ark itself".

Bahá'u'lláh's prophecy about Mount Carmel mentions all these structures:

*"Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Bahá who have been mentioned in the Book of Names."*¹⁶



Rainbow and Noah's Ark

¹⁶ Bahá'u'lláh, *LAWH-I-KARMIL (Tablet of Carmel)* (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/>)



Carmel Arch

The Arch also stands for the system through which the world can be managed on a spiritual basis, because its structure has been designed according to spiritual senses.

According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“The powers or external senses are five: sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. The internal are also five: common sense, imagination, reason, understanding and memory”¹⁷.

Carmel’s Arch replicates the Aurean structure of a man contained in 5, Báb’s number, which represents, so to speak, an anthropology and a metaphysics. It is composed of five buildings: the International Archives, the Sacred Texts Study Centre, the Universal House of Justice, the International Teaching Centre and the International Library. They all correspond to the five internal powers and numerically stand for the external ones.

The symbol of the Rainbow is probably considered in its heptadic form, which is seven semicircles alluding to the prophetic year 1260 ($360 \times 7 / 2$), whereas the Mountain with its 7 circles alludes to the multiple of the Great Cosmic year 2520, which was mentioned by Ibn Arabi in the Announcement of the Promised One, a text quoted by Nabil in his Narratives.

¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi y Casa Universal de Justicia, *El Trono del Espiritu: Enseñanzas Baha'is Sobre el Cuerpo Humano* (http://bahai-library.com/compilation_zohoori_trono_espiritu) (English translation: PJC)

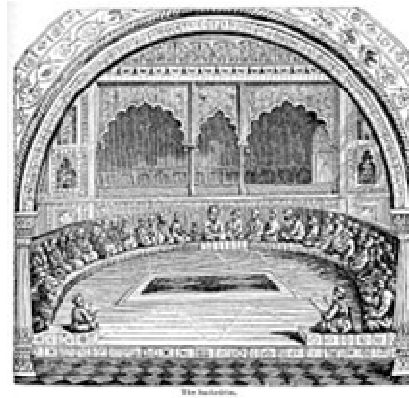
1260 is also a key number in the Tree of History by Joachim de Floris. This is why it is probably related to the Mountain of the Seven Circles of Dante, whose summit is the Terrestrial Paradise.

House of Justice

When referring to the archetypal structure of the centre of the world, in his essay *The King of the World*, René Guénon states that:

*“The mysteries of ‘the House of Justice’ (Beith-Din) are there. This is another another designation of the Supreme Spiritual Centre.”*¹⁸

Upon God’s commandment, Moses “gathered seventy men from the elderly in his people and made them linger around the Tabernacle.” (Numbers 11:24)



Members of the First House of Justice Sanedrín or Beit Din (House of Justice)

The site of the Universal House of Justice in the centre of the Arch structure stands for the cornerstone and the pinnacle of the system which maintains the structure united. It is associated with number 9 because this one

¹⁸ René Guénon, *El Rey del Mundo*, Pág. 66, Ediciones Fidelidad, Argentina, 1985. (English translation: PJC)

is the number of members of this institution; moreover, this digit is archetypically related to legislative and ruling bodies, from the Egyptian Pantheon, the Greek Archons, the IncaPacha-Cutis, the Lords of the Temple to the judges of American Courts of Justice.

It is also symbolically related to number 5, because it is one of the components of the Arch.

Angels and Guardians in Holy Land

In the structure of Platonic and Neoplatonic mysticisms there are some angelic beings as primary elements. Although the figure of the angel is mentioned in Bahá'ís writings, the angelical seems to be confined to human spiritual features (thus martyrs and saints seem to fit in the pattern of Angelic condition). At least, this is what the text of Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* suggests:

*“By "angels" is meant those who, reinforced by the power of the spirit, have consumed, with the fire of the love of God, all human traits and limitations, and have clothed themselves with the attributes of the most exalted Beings and of the Cherubim”.*¹⁹

Nevertheless, the sacred Bahá'ís texts employ the symbol of the angel to refer to archetypal structures associated with certain numbers which have equivalents in the traditional groups or Angelic Pleroma.

A primordial function of the Angel is keeping and watching over the Sacred; the symbolic groups of the guardians in Holy Land are related to this function. The monastic orders of chivalry, the most acclaimed being the Templars or the Order of the Temple, are structures of “guardianship”.

¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/KI/>)

The group of nine members is both emblematic for the Templars and the Bahá'í. After the death of the Guardian, nine members were appointed to remain in Holy Land and given the title of “Guardians”. Shoghi Effendi himself employed the symbolism of the Crusades and the Spiritual Chivalry. He created the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh and the Knights of the Lord of the Army.

Number 19 also appears as related to the motif of the Guardian. This is the case of the Indian monster of 19 mouths mentioned by Zimmer; of the 19 guardian angels from the Enochian Angelology (1 Enok :6/7); of the 19 guardian angels from the Muslim Inferno; of the 19 towers from Bernardo de Carpio (archetype of the Spanish heroe); of the 19 Kayceri towers in ancient Caesarea; of the 19 sentinels aligned in the barricades of Babí fortress in Zanjan; of the 19 apostles of Bahá'u'lláh; of the 19 Hands of Cause belonging to the original body; of the 18 disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which complete a Vahíd with their Master (19).

The forementioned text of Abdu'l-Bahá allows relating the structure of the 24 Elderly Men to that of the Guardians:

“In each cycle the guardians and holy souls have been twelve. So Jacob had twelve sons; in the time of Moses there were twelve heads or chiefs of the tribes; in the time of Christ there were twelve Apostles; and in the time of Muḥammad there were twelve Imáms. But in this glorious manifestation there are twenty-four, double the number of all the others, for the greatness of this manifestation requires it. These holy souls are in the presence of God seated on their own thrones, meaning that they reign eternally”²⁰.

²⁰ Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/>)

Conclusion

The symbolic system of Mount Carmel presents a clear resemblance to the representations of the centre of the world in other religions. Therefore, in some aspects it should also be considered equivalent to John's Heavenly Jerusalem; the Muslim Ka'ba, the Vaikuntha, the Shambhala, the Zoroastrian House of Origin and the Vastu-Purushan-Mandala.

It has a concentric design of clean-cut symmetry, which refers actions or successive states: a mystic trip, a pilgrimage or a quest of the Centre. Morphologically, it is a mandala in three spatial dimensions of the Divine Name; a structure which employs natural numbers and the primary geometric forms to symbolize the creating effect of the Divine Word.