

Bahá'u'lláh's Lawh-i Haqqu'n-Nas **Tablet of the Right of the People, Provisional Translation¹**

Dr. Mehran Ghasempour
Houston, Independent Scholar

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Praise be to God Who fulfilled what He revealed to all His Prophets and Messengers and gave to all the tidings of His days. And of them is the Day which He promised us in His Mighty Book through His saying, exalted be His dominion: on that day "God will enrich everyone out of His abundance."² And this, truly, is our Day, when I behold Him enriching all who enter in His shadow from the abundance of His knowledge and command, inasmuch as on this Day He hath placed the reins of knowledge in the grasp of His lowliest servant and in the possession of His most insignificant subject who hath held fast to the cord of His Love in the days of His manifestation.

And praise be to God who inspireth whom He wisheth with the hosts of His revelation and "casteth the light of His knowledge into the heart of whom He willeth." (H.adíth) There is no God but Him Who is manifest through the manifestation of His own Self, inasmuch as there remains no veil for Him but the light of His Beauty, and no cloud but the abundance of His manifestation. Blessing and peace be upon the noblest of His Chosen Ones, and the most distinguished of His creation, and upon His kindred, and upon His family, and upon His saints who stood firm in His Cause and continued steadfast in His love.

And then We convey that the letter of that loved one was perused and was the source of joy and cheer. God willing this divine confirmation may always be Our friend and this divine assistance continue, such that from time to time thou shouldst seek to become informed of, and have sympathy for, the wanderers of the wilderness of disappointment and obscurity. Thus may God reward thee with the best of rewards and graciously aid thee as He wisheth and pleaseth.

Thou hadst inquired as to how the settlement of one's rights in the world after death and paying the rights of people due to them can be conceived and be made possible in the great Resurrection, which hath been referred to as the Day of Judgement? Since these vanities, possessions, and rights that are desired and witnessed in this vain life have no existence in the worlds

¹ The Persian original is printed in `Abdu'l-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari (ed.), *Ma'iydih-i Asmani*, vol. 7, Iran, 129 BE, pp. 119-125.

² Qur'án, 4:130. All translations of the Qur'an are from Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's translation with some modifications.

after death, and assuming their existence, they will be of no profit or benefit to those to whom those rights are due; how then, will the settlement of one's rights be accomplished in those worlds? Inasmuch as it is current amongst people that God, the All-Merciful, at times forgoeth His own right and forgiveth, but He forgoeth not the rights of the people until their rights are settled.

O beloved of my heart, thou hast inquired of a subject which is extremely perplexing and abstruse. For understanding this subject is dependent upon understanding and comprehension of the days after death and the knowledge of the the Day of Resurrection. And the comprehension of these two subjects requireth a detached heart and necessitates a pure ear. Every ear is not worthy to hearken unto this call. The ear which doeth not hearken unto the roar of the trumpet and the bugle from the heaven of the Manifestation, how can it hear the whisperings of the birds?

But since I cannot but reply to the bidding of that honored friend, therefore, I will briefly state a compendium and express a few comparisons and examples that they may suffice. And there is no power or strength save in God, the One, the Subduer.

Thus I express to thee that what thou hast seen and heard in this mortal world of limitations, by any name and character and by any form or descriptive attribute, in every one of divine worlds is manifested and witnessed in a manner suitable and proper to each world, which shineth forth and revealeth itself by another name, character, form and descriptive attribute.

This death that thou hast heard of in the world, referreth to the outward appearance and the garment, and not to the truth and the inner essence. Certainly the realities of things, through different appearances and various manifestations, truth after truth, shine forth and reveal themselves in every world. The sages of mature wisdom who have drunk from the mystic choice wine - God requite them - have believed in the embodiment of deeds.

The All-Glorious saith: "God will reward them for their attributions !"³ The Dawning-Place of revelation, the All-Merciful, hath said that people are recompensed according to their deeds; reward for good and punishment for evil.

Thus it becometh evident that a deed will remain and every attribute will exist until recompense is given according to the deed and attribute itself. Therefore, any deed and any attribute that appeareth from any person

³ Quran 6:139

hath a form in every world and unveileth itself "that God may reward every soul what he hath earned; verily, God is swift in reckoning."⁴

And every time We wish, in making this subject understandable, to explain the nature of the manifestations of things in the innumerable worlds by mentioning and setting forth an example which is nearer to understanding and comprehension, I consider none better to mention than the world of sleep. It is said that sleep is the brother of death, that thou may know the brother by the likeness of the brother. Thus observe that in the world of dreams thou dost witness some things, and after awaking thou dost interpret and explain them in this world by another name, form and description. And then as days go by they are witnessed in a like manner as they were interpreted and explained.

Thus O brother, every moment hath itself been from the dream, and in the world of dreams thou hast seen such a thing which, had another name and descriptive attribute in the dream, and hath another name and descriptive attribute in this world. Therefore, acknowledge thou likewise, the different forms in the world after death and know thou of a certainty that the truth, essence, oneness, form, and descriptive attributes are different. And in the event that thou hast not seen this same station with thine own eyes, thou shouldst refer to the interpretation of dream interpreters who possess knowledge and have interpreted every action and word, and have explained every thing.

The Most Truthful of Speakers hath given utterance in mentioning Joseph's dream (peace be upon the Lord of our age and upon Him) and hath mentioned Joseph's explanations and interpretations of the two persons mentioned in the Book.

Ponder now, what a world is this wherein father and mother are seen as the sun and the moon, and brother viewed as a star? And what a world is this which is seen conversely, inasmuch as the sun and the moon are witnessed as the father and mother, and the star is observed as the brother?

He saith, glorified be His dominion: "Lo! I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon - I saw them prostrating themselves unto me."⁵ And the interpretation of this dream became evident when Joseph sat upon the throne and Jacob, peace be upon Him, with the eleven brothers fell at Joseph's feet.

Thus, after this question is definitely proven, the settlement of every right in every world is in a manner that accords with that world. And, of course, if it were otherwise then the right is not settled. I give thee another example that

⁴ Qurán, 14:51

⁵ Qur'an, 12:4

perchance through manifold examples that which hath been expressed should be closer to understanding and the subject be acknowledged.

Consider thou that should a person usurp a grain or a seed from another person and he should plant it in his own garden in the spring season, till it becometh green and flourishing until it finally bears fruit and becomes a tree in the summer season. Then, in this summer season, a just king desireth to restore the rights of the one who was wronged. How would the king accomplish this? Would he, in exchange, seize a grain or seed? Or would he seize the tree itself with all its fruit, to surrender it to the one who was wronged? Surely thou wilt say the tree. However, the tree in this form is different from the previous form, and its name and description is different from the name and description in the spring season, because that grain or seed, as thou wouldst claim, doth not exist. And assuming that it doth exist and the same kind be given back, it would give no fruit and be of no consequence to the owner inasmuch as the spring season, which was the season of planting, hath ended and the grain or the seed will be an idle object. To outward view it is possible to say that the grain or the seed doth not exist and giveth no fruit. Nevertheless, in truth and reality this grain and seed doth exist and is witnessed as a tree and fruit, which is better and more valuable.

Many a time the settlement of rights hath taken place in this same world, without thy being aware of it. Even as it doth happen at times that the riches and possessions are the garment of fate and afflictions, and affliction and fate are revealed as riches. Thus at times it doth occur that the loss of possessions redounds to the removal of affliction, and in this instance it maketh no difference whether this loss of possessions be due to heavenly means or to the tyranny committed by the person who stealeth thy possessions. In this case, whoever usurps and takes such possessions, that person hath removed the affliction and fate from thee and hath taken them unto himself. Could a better settlement of rights than this one be conceived? Nay, by the Lord of the worlds!

And were I to unveil and elaborate upon the manifestation of deeds, actions, and words, as they reveal themselves in various unlimited forms in the worlds of God, it is feared that on the one hand the sanctified souls would abandon their bodies and ascend toward the seats of grandeur of the All-Merciful, and the ungodly and tyrannical souls would die for fear of what they have done in this vain life.

O what longing for the spiritual characteristics, goodly deeds, truthful and beneficial words and what manifests from them from the lofty heavens, to the vast earth: shining suns, resplendent moons, radiant stars, clear springs, flowing streams, pure air, sublime palaces, lofty trees, wondrous fruits,

clusters of fruit that are near,⁶ warbling birds, reddened leaves,⁷ fragrant roses!

Whereas I say, "Shelter! Shelter! O my Lord, the All-Merciful, from sinful characteristics, ungodly actions, unseemly deeds, lying and harmful words and that which appears from them:⁸ which manifests on earth as hellish fire, hell, the tree of Zaqqu'm,⁹ the bitter thorn fruit¹⁰ and in the form of all the wickedness, deceptions, sicknesses, sorrows, Simúm,¹¹ swords, arrows, spears.

Great God! revealing of the mysteries, any further, is not permitted! And I say: greatness, and again greatness and grandeur belongeth to God, the One, the Subduer.

I give thee another example from the world of divine law, which corresponds to the world of being, and I will conclude the examples with the divine laws, that perchance thou mayest, to the extent that thou art familiar with the worlds of God, know and comprehend the similitude of the world, and extrapolate it, as much as thou art able, to the endless worlds. I give thee an example of the divine law of Islam and the divine law before it which thou art familiar with and cannot but accept:

If a jug of wine or a measure of swine meat was lawfully owed to a Christian by another Christian, should both of them accept Islam, and the magistrates of the religious court were to rule on the payment of this debt to the creditor, how would the magistrates accomplish this and take give is due to the creditor? Notwithstanding that in Islamic law wine and swine meat are useless, have no value, and are of no benefit to the claimant, thou hast no recourse except to say either that the debtor must give restitution from whatever is lawful in Islam, or say that the defendant must pay its price according to what is fixed and specified among those to whom it is lawful. Similar cases are mentioned and written in the books of the doctors of religion. And if I wish to give thee one hundred thousand examples, mystical or vernacular, by God's power and strength I am not unable to do so. However, I fear that this might become lengthy and tedious for thee, and thou mayest become perplexed by what was said.

Thus We end Our argument and say: Praise be to God Who guided us unto the knowledge of His Most Great Name and made Us know what the whole world hath not known.

⁶ Quran 69:23

⁷ *awráqun muh.ammara/awráqun muh.marra*

⁸ What follows is a list of tropes for the traditional Islamic topography of hell

⁹ Qur'an, 37:62, etc.

¹⁰ Qur'an, 88:6

¹¹ *Samúm/Sumúm*: since the text has no vowel markings, the word could be hot wind, hot sandstorm, or *simúm*, poisons. Quran, 56:42, 52:27, 15:27