

Tablet of Ahmad, The

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Tablet of Ahmad (Arabic) is one of the best loved and most powerful letters ever penned by the hand of Bahá'u'lláh. Recommended as an effective resource in achieving our goals and in coping with difficulties, this Tablet carries a number of references which may be unfamiliar to some believers. The following is a lightly annotated version which provides a small degree of insight into some of the meanings of this unique work. The friends should remember that, whereas the text of the Tablet of Ahmad is authoritative, the annotations represent only the opinion of the scholar and are therefore subject to error. Cursory though this may be, it is hoped that this examination will be of interest to our readers.

Historical Background

The work of Bahá'u'lláh which is known as the Tablet of Ahmad (Arabic) was revealed in the year 1865 in honor of Ahmad, a believer from Yazd. Although his family was wealthy, instead of being drawn to business, he focused his energies upon mystical pursuits and became an ascetic. As a young man, some twenty years before the declaration of the Báb, Ahmad travelled to India in search of spiritual fulfillment and in the years which followed he came in contact with leaders of a wide range of religious thought. Becoming disillusioned with what he encountered, he eventually returned to Persia and, while residing in Káshán, he heard the news of the declaration of the Báb.

He soon recognized his Lord and eventually was granted the supreme bounty of attaining His presence. Before long there were many Bábis in Káshán and persecution followed. By 1858 the level of the persecutions there compelled Ahmad to move elsewhere and he chose to join the companions of Bahá'u'lláh, Who had been exiled to Baghdad in 1853.

During his six years in Baghdad, Ahmad gained repeated access to the presence of the Blessed Beauty and on one occasion was granted the inestimable bounty of beholding the innermost beauty of Bahá'u'lláh, as attested to in a tablet written in Bahá'u'lláh's own hand.

After the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh and His further exiles to Constantinople and Adrianople, Ahmad remained in Baghdad. He eventually decided to join his Lord and set out for Adrianople. Upon arriving in Constantinople, he was presented with a letter from the Blessed Beauty which exhorted him to surrender his will to the will of God, to be steadfast and to persevere in the face of opposition. This letter is now known as the Tablet of Ahmad.

Returning to Persia, he travelled extensively as a teacher of the Cause and led many Bábis to recognize 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. As proof of the power and authority of Bahá'u'lláh, he carried with him the original Tablet of Ahmad, written in Bahá'u'lláh's own hand. Ahmad passed away at the age of 100 in the year 1902.

For further information, refer to The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh,
Vol. II by Adib Taherzadeh, pp. 107-136

The Tablet of Ahmad[1]

He is the King, the All-Knowing, the Wise!

Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise[2] singeth upon the twigs of the
Tree of Eternity,[3] with holy and sweet melodies, proclaiming to the sincere
ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the
Divine Unity[4] to the court of the Presence of the Generous One, informing the
severed ones of the message which hath been revealed by God, the King, the
Glorious, the Peerless, guiding the lovers to the seat of sanctity and to this
resplendent Beauty.

Verily this is that Most Great Beauty, foretold in the books of the
Messengers, through Whom truth shall be distinguished from error and the wisdom
of every command shall be tested. Verily He is the Tree of Life[5] which
bringeth forth the fruits of God, the Exalted, the Powerful, the Great.

O Ahmad! Bear thou witness that verily He is God and there is no
God but Him, the King, the Protector, the Incomparable, the Omnipotent. And
that the One Whom He hath sent forth by the name of 'Alí[6] was the True One
from God, to Whose commands we are all conforming.

Say: O people be obedient to the verses of God, which have been
enjoined in the Bayán[7] by the Glorious, the Wise One. Verily He is the King
of the Messengers and His Book is the mother Book, did ye but know.

Thus doth the Nightingale utter His message unto you from this
prison.[8] He hath but to deliver this clear message. Whosoever desireth, let
him turn away from this counsel and whosoever desireth let him choose the path
to his Lord.

O people, if ye deny these verses, by what proof hath ye believed
in God? Produce it, O assemblage of false ones.

Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, they are not, and never
shall be able to do this, even should they combine to assist one another.

O Ahmad! Forget not My bounties while I am absent. Remember My days
during thy days, and My exile and banishment in this remote prison. And be thou
so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of
the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise
against thee.

Be thou as a flame of fire[9] to My enemies and a river of life
eternal to My loved ones, and be not of those who doubt.

And if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation
for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby.

Rely upon God, thy God and the Lord of thy fathers. For the people

are wandering in the paths of delusion, bereft of discernment to see God with their own eyes, or hear His melody with their own ears. Thus have We found them, as thou also dost witness.

Thus hath their superstitions become veils between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God, the Exalted, the Great.

Be thou assured in thyself that verily, he who turns away from this Beauty hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past and showeth pride towards God from all eternity to all eternity.[10]

Learn well this Tablet, O Ahmad. Chant it during thy days and withhold not thyself therefrom. For verily, God hath ordained for him who chants it, the reward of a hundred martyrs[11] and a service in both worlds. These favors have We bestowed upon thee as a bounty on Our part and a mercy from Our presence, that thou mayest be of those who are grateful.

By God! Should one who is in affliction or grief read this Tablet with absolute sincerity, God will dispel his sadness, solve his difficulties and remove his afflictions.

Verily, He is the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.

Notes

1) Note that this is the Arabic Tablet of Ahmad and not the Lawh-i-Ahmad, which was revealed in Persian for Hájí Mírzá Ahmad of Káshán, the first Bábí in that town. The Ahmad for whom the Arabic tablet was revealed was the second Bábí in Káshán.

2) A reference to Bahá'u'lláh.

3) A symbol of the source of God's revelation, somewhat akin to the burning bush in Exodus 3:2, and the 'rod out of the stem of Jesse' in Isaiah 11:1,10; the latter referring directly to the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh.

4) This refers to the oneness of all the Manifestations of God.

5) See note 2. Another title of Bahá'u'lláh which refers to trees is that of the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, the tree beyond which there is no passing. This refers to a tree which is traditionally planted at the ending of a road and used here possibly as a symbol that all roads lead to God. See also the reference to the "Sacred Tree" found in Bahá'í Prayers, p. 172.

6) i.e: 'Alí Muhammad; the Báb. This may also carry a hidden reference to Bahá'u'lláh Himself (Husayn 'Alí). There is an Islámic tradition in which the Imám Husayn asked Muhammad if he, Husayn, would be in the company of those resurrected on the Day of Judgement. Muhammad reportedly replied by saying that first 'Alí would come, followed by Muhammad. After this would come Husayn and then 'Alí once more. These are the given names of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. It should also be noted that the Tablet of Ahmad was revealed only a year after the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bábí

community was quite large in relation to those who now called themselves Bahá'ís. The persecution of the Bábí community had been quite severe and, along with the agitations of Subh-i-Azál, this had driven many of the Báb's followers to the edge of despair. The affirmation of allegiance to the Báb which is contained in the Tablet of Ahmad not only bolstered the spirits of these beleaguered souls, but also turned their attention to the divine authority of the Author of this tablet.

7) The foremost book of the Báb. Besides the laws and exhortations it contains, it also provides many clues as to the name and the date of the appearance of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

8) This was written during Bahá'u'lláh's exile in Adrianople.

9) This refers to the qualities of fire, which is itself an ambivalent force. As it is of a gaseous nature, it can not be broken or damaged, but repels the hand which seeks to contain it. Other properties of fire are those of light and warmth; qualities which are beneficial and non-destructive. We might also refer also to the symbol of fire used in the prayer for detachment found in Bahá'í Prayers, p. 52, which reads, "...Great is the blessedness of him that hath drawn nigh unto it and heard its roaring .". The prayer refers to this irresistible fire as being empowered to consume the veils between the supplicant and the Almighty. In a talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, found on page 147 of Promulgation of Universal Peace, the Master described this symbol as, "the fire of the love of God". He also linked the symbols of fire and water to the attainment of nearness to God; the water representing, "the water of life, which is knowledge."

10) On page 52 of Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Blessed Beauty states, "It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold Them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech and proclaiming the same Faith." On pages 85-86 of The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, He also writes "This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future."

11) Bahá'u'lláh has described the martyrs as having, "attained unto His (God's) Court, drunk the cup of His dívine Presence, and been invested with the honor of His most excellent favor...." Their acts of supreme sacrifice gained them admittance, "unto the loftiest chambers of Paradise." (Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 182)

— Tablet of Ahmad, The (Used by permission of the curator)