

Tablet of All Food: Tablet study outline

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Name of Tablet in Arabic or Persian: Lawh-i-Kullu't-Ta`am

Translation into English: "Tablet of All Food." This tablet was translated by Stephen Lambden and published in the *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin* 3:1 (June, 1984), and a revised version of his translation can be found at the Bahá'í Academics Resource Library, <http://bahai-library.com>. It is summarized by Bijan Ma'sumian in "The Realms of Divine Existence as Described in the Tablet of All Food" in *Deepen* magazine, 3:2:2 (Summer, 1994). It is also discussed in *Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory* pp. 112-113, in *God Passes By* p. 116, and a short passage translated on p. 118. Many books on Sufism discuss the Sufi terms "hahut," "lahut," "jabarut," "malakut," and "nasut." Juan Cole's "Bahá'u'lláh and the Naqshbandi Sufis," in *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 2: *From Iran East to West*, addresses Bahá'u'lláh's unique use of the terms. Jack McLean produces a very thorough analysis of the worlds of God in his "Prolegomenon to a Bahá'í Theology," in *Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 5:1 (1992).

Significance of Name: Mírzá Kamalu'd-Din was seeking explanation of the Qur'an verse III:93 (III:87 by some numberings). Pickthall renders this verse as: "All food was lawful unto the children of Israel, save that which Israel forbade himself, in days before the Torah was revealed. Say: Produce the Torah and read it unto us if you are truthful." Yusuf-Alí renders it as "All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, except what Israel made unlawful for himself before the Torah was revealed. Say: 'Bring ye the Torah and study it, if you be men of truth.'" Yusuf-Alí also provides the following note: "The Arabs ate the flesh of the camel, which is lawful in Islam, but it was prohibited by the Jewish Law of Moses. But that Law was very strict because of the 'hardness of heart' of Israel, because of Israel's insolence and iniquity. Before it was promulgated Israel was free to choose its own food." The name of the Tablet thus refers to the "all food" which was lawful to the Children of Israel.

Tablet was revealed in: Arabic, in a style similar to that of the Báb

Name of Recipient: Hájí Mírzá Kamalu'd-Din of Naraq

Reason for Revelation of the Tablet: Mírzá Kamalu'd-Din, a man of culture who once visited the Báb, went to the Báb's nominal successor, Mírzá Yahyá, seeking elucidation of this Quranic verse. Disappointed by Yahyá's answer, he then turned to Bahá'u'lláh, who in response revealed this Tablet, which so impressed its recipient that he declared his belief in and loyalty to Bahá'u'lláh. Part of the reason for its revelation may be Mírzá Kamalu'd-Din's faith, for Shoghi Effendi says that the tablet "so enraptured the soul of its recipient that he would have, but for the restraining hand of Bahá'u'lláh, proclaimed forthwith his discovery of God's hidden Secret

[Bahá'u'lláh]." (_God Passes By_, 117)

Questions asked that are answered in Tablet (if known): Explanations of the terms "food," "Israel," and "Children of Israel" are given. Taherzadeh only summarizes the former, the meanings given for "food." Meanings he summarizes from the Tablet are: (1) All knowledge; (2) recognition of the Manifestation of God; (3) in the Islamic Dispensation, "food" is the guardianship of that Faith by the Imáms who succeeded Muhammad; (4) "food" also means the ocean of Knowledge hidden within Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets.

Date of Revelation: It was revealed shortly before Bahá'u'lláh's departure for Kurdistan, and since we know that he departed on April 10, 1854, we can place this tablet at late 1853 to early 1854.

Place of Revelation: A quarter of Baghdad called Kazimayn (See _Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory_, p. 113)

Role of Amaneuensis or Secretary: Bahá'u'lláh wrote and chanted the tablet himself (see _Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory_, p. 113)

Other Tablets revealed at about the same time: There were numerous ones, for in _Epistle to the Son of the Wolf_, p. 22, Bahá'u'lláh writes "After Our arrival [in Iraq] We revealed as a copious rain, by the aid of God and His Divine grace and mercy, Our verses, and sent them to various parts of the world." These included "Saqi-Az-Ghayb-i-Baqa" and "Qasídiy-i-Varqá'iyih."

Style, subject, and genre of the Tablet: [?]

Style: This tablet contains both tones, that of command and authority and that of servitude, meekness and supplication.

Subject: Writings dealing with old scriptures, religious beliefs and doctrines of the past. Tablets dealing with subjects of learning and knowledge, divine philosophy, mysteries of creation, medicine, alchemy, etc.

Genre: Essay or book revealed as a letter to an individual. It possesses the defining characteristics of length, elaborate arguments, and a complex internal structure (division into chapters or sections).

Voice of Tablet: [?] Bahá'u'lláh

Outline Contents of Tablet (if possible): The following outline is adapted from one student's homework:

Israel & children identified with the Báb and his followers

hinted of His intention of leaving Baghdad

deplored the afflictions and sufferings he experienced at the hands of those who claimed to be followers of the Báb.

gave some spiritual meanings of the word food (knowledge; recognition of the Manifestation of God; Guardianship in Islam by the Imáms; ocean of hidden knowledge contained in His Tablets)

revealed the existence of many spiritual worlds including: Hahut (Heaven of Oneness, Realm of Divine Being, the imperishable Essence), Lahut (plane of Divinity, the Heavenly Court), Jabarut (All-Highest Dominion - realm of God's

Chosen Ones), and Malakut (the Kingdom of God - Heaven of Justice).
referred to this mortal world as Nasut (Heaven of Bounty)
gave some interpretations of the words 'Israel' and 'children'
called Quddus the 'Last Point'

List the principal themes of the Tablet:

There are numerous themes in this Tablet which the available books don't mention and hence you're not responsible for. The most important theme, and the one given the most coverage, is the schemata of the four/five worlds given above. (Actually, this theme occupies no more than 1/5 of the Tablet.)

One other theme that should be mentioned is perhaps an indirect one: in reading both this Tablet and descriptions of it, one can't escape the awareness of just how many meanings the Manifestations are able to derive from (exegesis) or read into (eisegesis) the Holy Scriptures. You'll notice that, for all the interpretations Bahá'u'lláh gives of the meaning of "all food," none is the simple, obvious answer about camel meat which can be found in numerous books about and commentaries on the Qur'an; Bahá'u'lláh is apparently concerned with revealing only divine teachings here, perhaps leaving the obvious and concrete interpretations of scripture to others. So the other theme one can infer is how manifold are the meanings of Scripture, as Bahá'u'lláh points out in the *_Kitáb-i-Íqán_*, pp. 254-255: "It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language...None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended. Thus it is recorded: 'Every knowledge hath seventy meanings, of which one only is known amongst the people. And when the Qa'im shall arise, He shall reveal unto men all that which remaineth.' He also saith: 'We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain.'"

Tablet's relationship to other tablets:

Relation to other tablets that deal with the Worlds of God: *_Gleanings_*, 151-152, contains the quote: "As to thy question concerning the worlds of God. Know thou of a truth that the worlds of God are countless in their number, and infinite in their range. None can reckon or comprehend them except God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

Biography or bio note of the recipient of the Tablet

Brief bio: Hájí Mírzá Kamalu'd-Din died in Naraq c. AH 1298-9/AD 1881. He figures in Bábí/Bahá'í history in that his great-grandfather, Hájí Mullá Mihdí, penned an account of the martyrdom of Imám Husayn. Such accounts were and are extremely numerous in Persian, but this particular one happened to especially move the Báb upon his hearing it recited in Mah-Ku.