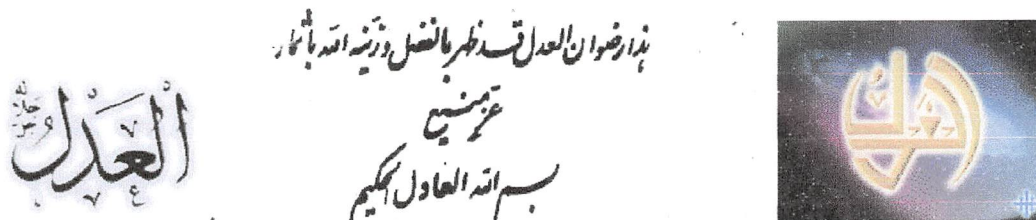


**A Consideration of the Tablet of the Ridwan al-'Adl, (The Ridwan ["Beatitude"] of Justice) of Baha'u'llah**

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**"This is the Ridwan al `Adl ("Paradise of Justice"). It was indeed made manifest through the Divine Bounty (al-fadl) for God hath ornamented it with His Mighty, Incomparable [Scriptural] Traces (al-athar)."**

**In the Name of God,**

**the Promoter of Justice (al-adil), the All-Wise (al-hakim). ..**

**"This is a Tablet (lawḥ) in which God raised up His Name, the Promoter of Justice (al-`Adil). [2] Therefrom did He breathe forth the Spirit of Justice (ruh al-`adl) within the temples of the totality of created things (hayakil al-khala'iq)" (Opening lines, AQA 4:299).**

**"Bestir yourselves, O people, in anticipation of the days of Divine justice (ayyam al-`adl), for the promised hour is now come. Beware lest ye fail to apprehend its import and be accounted among the erring" (AQA 4: 314 =Gleanings XII).**

The roughly twenty page wholly Arabic scriptural Tablet of Baha'u'llah entitled Ridwan al-'Adl, (The Riḍwān ["Paradise", "Beatitude"] of Justice) commences as translated above. It was addressed to a certain Aqa Sayyid Muhammad Ridā' Shahmirzadi (= "Rida after Nabil" [= Muhammad Rida']) (d. 1310/1892-3) one of the Baqiyyat al-sayf ('Remnant of the Sword'), the survivors of the Shaykh Tabarsī upheaval of 1848-9 (Ishraq Khavari, *Ganj*, No. 54, p. 208). This key Tablet of Baha'u'llah most likely dates from the late Edirne [Adrianople] period, perhaps early

1867. The text can be found in numerous manuscripts and has been published, in whole or in part, a number of times; including within the compilation of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah named *Athar-i Qalam-i A'la* ('Traces of the Supreme Pen'); see vol. 4 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.), pp. 245-257 and (rev. ed. 125/1968), vol. 4 pp. 299-319. Shoghi Effendi translated two brief paragraphs of the 'Tablet of the Ridwan al-'Adl' focusing on its central concept of 'adl (justice) in his compilation of the writings of Baha'u'llah entitled *Gleanings from the writings of Baha'u'llah* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1935), section No. XII [12] (p. 17) and section LXXXVIII [88] (p. 175).

A fairly lengthy Tablet, this revelatory writing opens with three explicit paragraphs then many more addressed to "this Name", the "Just". The many subjects dealt with cannot all be listed here. It must suffice to note that the Incomprehensibility of God is underlined and celebrated, the importance of justice for kings and rulers set forth, the position of the Bab as the herald, and the history of the persecuted, rejected and martyred figures of John the Baptist and Jesus is outlined as an object lesson for the followers of the Bab.

The central doctrinal locus of the 'Tablet of the Ridwan al-'Adl', is God's Name, al-'Adl (the Just) or al-Adil ("the Promoter of Justice"). The implications of the effects of this Divine Name are closely associated with the genesis of the Baha'i revelation as an expression of the Ridwan (loosely, Paradise, Contentment, Beatitude, etc) of new age fulfillment. Baha'u'llah identified the initial, April-May 1863 disclosure of his new religion as an expression of Ridwan that is closely associated with the realization of Divine and human Justice.

A number of Biblical and Islamic predictions have it that in the eschatological, latter-day era, global justice would be realized at the messianic age:

"Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips (Isaiah 11:5) ... Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased. Upon him I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the

nations ... He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice (mishpat) in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law (le-torat-ow) (Isaiah 42:1, 4) ... They will be called oaks of justice ('e-le ha-tzedek), the planting of the LORD to show his glory (le-hit'pa'er)" (Isaiah 61:3).

### إِذَا قَامَ الْقَائِمُ حَكَمَ بِالْعَدْلِ

"When the [messianic] Qa'im rises he will rule with justice (al-'adl) ... He [the expected Qa'im] will fill the earth with justice ('adl) and equity (qist) just as it was filled with tyranny and oppression" (from Kulayni, al-Kafi cited al-Mufid, al-Irshad and Majlisi; Bihar 52: 338, etc).

"I am a believer in thee [Imam Ḥusayn] and am one certain about thy [eschatological] return [parousia] (iyāb) with the regulations of my religion (bi-sharā'ī dīnī) and the finalities of my endeavors (khwātīm `amalī)" (al-Ṭūsī, Ziyārat al-'Arba`īn, in Tahdhīb al-aḥkām, 1079).

The principles Baha'u'llah championed at his 1863 Ridwan declaration and a decade later in his *Most Holy Book* (al-kitab al-aqdas) and other writings, were centrally related to the unfolding of the 'Paradise of Justice' on all levels of creation and human society. The Tablet of the Ridwan al-'Adl celebrates and comments upon this.

The roughly synonymous Names of God al-'Adl ("the Just"; see Qur'an 6:115, 4:58, 16:90, etc) and al-'Adil ("the Just", 'Promoter of Justice") do not explicitly occur in the Qur'an as an Attribute of God although the concept of Divine and human justice is central to the Qur'anic message and to the Islamic religion. Thus in certain Sunni versions of a prophetic *hadīth* (tradition) God's Name al-'Adl ("the Just") is important as the thirtieth of the ninety-nine 'Most Beautiful Names of God' (al-asma al-husna; see Q. 7:180; 17:110; 20:8; 59:24). In another Shi'i Islamic version relayed from Imam `Alī (d. 40/661), it is counted number forty-eight of the ninety-nine Names of God (see al-

Ghazzali, al-Maqsad, 105f; cf. No. 86, p.153 al-Muqsit (“the Equitable”) and al-Kaf’ami, al-Misbah, 399-400). Close to the beginning of the Lawh-i Ridwan al-`Adl, Baha’u’llah alludes to these traditions referring to “this Name”, al-`Adl / `Adil (the Just) as “a sun among the suns of Our Most Beautiful Names (al-asma al-husna)”.

Justice and its promotion are very important religious concepts. One of the main characteristics of the latter-day, divine and messianic purpose is the realization of international global divine justice. At the very beginning of the *Hidden Words* (c. 1858 CE) of Baha’u’llah (Arabic No.2) a Baha’i ethic of *inṣāf* (“equity” cf. the Name of God al-Muqsit) is counted the “best beloved” of all things in the “sight of God”. The concept of *inṣāf* (“equity”) and `adl (“justice”) are very closely related and can again be synonymous.

Among the themes which will be summarily dealt with in this paper will be the pre-Babi-Baha’i promises of Divine Justice and their evolving fulfillment in the contemporary Baha’i and non-Baha’i world.

### **Translation**

“Bestir yourselves, O people, in anticipation of the days of Divine justice, for the promised hour is now come. Beware lest ye fail to apprehend its import and be accounted among the erring.” (Gl. XII).

“Know verily that the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation. Were His law to be such as to strike terror into the hearts of all that are in heaven and on earth, that law is naught but manifest justice. The fears and agitation which the revelation of this law provokes in men’s hearts should indeed be likened to the cries of the suckling babe weaned from his mother’s milk, if ye be of them that perceive. Were men to discover the motivating purpose of God’s Revelation, they would assuredly cast away their fears, and, with hearts filled with gratitude, rejoice with exceeding gladness.” (Gl. LXXXVIII)