

Introduction: Tablet of the Vision

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Original title: Lawh-i Ru'ya

Written by Baha'u'llah in the Akka period

Translation by Juan Cole

Listen to the introduction:

{play}audio/Intro_Tablet_of_Vision.mp3|0|#FFFFFF|0{/play}

Baha'u'llah wrote Tablet of the Vision during his imprisonment in the prison-city of Akka. It was revealed on 1 March 1873, which was the eve of the anniversary of the birth of the Bab. The tablet contains a reference to Baha'u'llah's death, which came 19 years later in 1892.

Much of the tablet is devoted to Baha'u'llah's poetic description of a vision he had of the woman who symbolises the spirit of the Baha'i revelation. The tablet begins, in the second paragraph, with Baha'u'llah explaining that he will describe the vision as a favour to his reader. Baha'u'llah expresses the hope that the description will "transport" the reader to "a shoreless sea", and that the reader will see "the world of light" within the physical world and be convinced that Baha'u'llah has "worlds within this world".

Baha'u'llah then proceeds to describe the vision, which begins with a luminous woman making a dramatic entrance before Baha'u'llah, who is seated on the throne. She unveils and wanders about, and Baha'u'llah describes her beautiful appearance and movements. Towards the end of the vision, Baha'u'llah recounts her interactions with him and tells us that she asks him why he has consented to be imprisoned in Akka. She suggests that he set out for the spiritual worlds, which the people on earth have never seen. This is the passage that refers to Baha'u'llah's physical death.

After describing what he saw, Baha'u'llah explains that the vision coincides with the anniversary of the birth of the Bab. He says that he has honoured the Bab with "another Day". This is a reference to the fact that his own revelation is, in a spiritual sense, the return of the Bab's revelation. He explains that his revelation is the dawn of the Day in which the divine is manifested to creation and that it has brought forgiveness to all and spread fragrances and ecstasy over those who are "in their graves" - that is, those who're unaware of the spiritual renewal. He states that his revelation is the goal of all those searching for their spiritual home.

Baha'u'llah ends the tablet with a short prayer. It asks that the believers detach themselves from all but God and set their faces toward the horizon of God's grace. He asks God to ordain for them what will profit them in the physical world and the spiritual worlds.