

"BE"
Káf, Nún and Kun
A Compilation with Comments
by Jon Trevathan

"Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, has explained the significance of the "letters B and E". They constitute the word "Be", which, he states, "means the creative Power of God Who through His command causes all things to come into being" and "the power of the Manifestation of God, His great spiritual creative force". The imperative "Be" in the original Arabic is the word "Kun", consisting of the two letters "Káf" and "Nún". This word has been used in the Qur'án as God's bidding calling creation into being."

(Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 247)

In this Note, I will attempt to show:

1. The letter "B" ("Káf") is representative of the active force ("Will" or "Mashíyyát").
2. The letter "E" ("Nún ") is representative of the passive force ("Purpose" or Irádih).
3. The joining of Káf and Nún constitutes a repeating pattern and continuum in all of the Realms of Being.

"Since the Ancient of Days created mankind for the purpose of apprehending the power shining within themselves, and made reward and punishment the instrument for fulfilling this purpose, He created the Will from nothing through the causality of the Will itself, without qualification or explanation. After that He created all things through its causality, and the creation of anything upon which the letter of the Will hath fallen is only possible through seven stages of contingency. Without these stages nothing is possible in the contingent world. These seven stages are Will (*mashíyyat*), Purpose (*irádih*), predestination (*qadar*), fate (*qa?á'*), permission (*idhn*), fixed time (*ajal*), and the book (*kitáb*). The first stage of anything for which the "thingness" of existence is not a condition is the Will. The moment thingness is attached to it, it becometh Purpose, and this moment is accompanied by predestination. The manifestation of these three stages is fate. In this regard, it is incumbent upon all creatures to acknowledge the spontaneity (*badá'*) of God, lauded and exalted be He, for His will cannot be altered after the stage of fate; it is fixed. The decrees of permission, fixed time, and the book are subsequent to execution (*im?á'*). Indeed, the reality of creation and the secret of the origination of existence are contained in these seven stages in both the hidden and manifest worlds. "

(The Báb, *?a?ifíy-i-U?úl va Furú'* , *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 1, pp. 99-100) (provisional translation by Keven Brown) Kevin Brown) "Selections from the Bahá'í Writings and from Shaykh Ahmad on the Seven Stages of Creation"

"I recognize, O my God, that whenever something is related to Thee, the decree of the Will is applicable to it, and whenever it is related to itself, the decree of Purpose is established in it. When this duality is realized the decree of predestination is manifested. After these three have descended, all seven [Stages of Creation] will be generated, inasmuch as it is impossible for anything to be realized save through these seven stages. Six of them belong to the letter Wáw in connection to the limitations of things, and one of them belongeth to their manifestations in the station of the Sign of God. ...".

(The Báb, *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 1, p. 100) (provisional translation by Keven Brown) Kevin Brown, "Selections from the Bahá'í Writings and from Shaykh Ahmad on the Seven Stages of Creation"

"Will is that active force which controlleth these relationships and these incidents." (Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 198)

At the commencement of these seven stages. we are informed by Bahá'u'lláh, in the Tablet of Wisdom (LAWH-I-HIKMAT):

"That which hath been in existence had existed before, but not in the form thou seest today. The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different."

Keven Brown wrote the following as part of a no longer accessible internet dialogue titled "Dialogue Regarding Platonic Forms, etc":

-----"the Báb explains: "Through this [second] station [Purpose, which is enformed matter (*substance*)] the mode of relationships known as predestination appeareth, which is the beginning of multiplicity and infinitude. Whatever is going to exist in the contingent world cometh into existence through the existence of Purpose [i.e. enformed matter (*substance*)]" (Ibid.).

-----I anticipate that you will ask why I call Purpose "enformed matter" (*substance*). The reason is that both Shaykh Ahmad and the Báb identify the first stage of the creative act, Will, with matter (*substance*), and the second stage, Purpose, with form. Will and Purpose are also indentified with the two letters "B" and "E" of the imperative BE! (Kun). The Báb states: "The "E" (Nún) in the stage of utterance is the same as the "B" (Káf). It is the totality of the possible (imkán), and the possible itself in the world of contingency is fully contained in the word "BE" (kun). The "B" is the stage of the Will and the "E" is the stage of Purpose. The Will is the father of all things, and Purpose is their mother. As He hath stated: ' 'Alí and I are the parents of this people.' Through the "B" God created the matter (mádda -- [*also translated as "substance"*]) of all things...and through the "E" God created the form (súra) of all things" (provisional translation from the Báb's Tafsir-i-Basmallah, INBA 60:48-49, also INBA 64:74). Keven Brown, "Dialogue Regarding Platonic Forms, etc" (a copy of this dialogue was saved off-line and can be shared upon request.

With regards to Keven Brown's comments, I should note that the word "mádda" might have been translated as "substance" to distinguish it from the matter of our every day experience, that his translation of the Báb's Tafsir-i-Basmallah also appeared in "Selections from the Bahá'í Writings and from Shaykh Ahmad on the Seven Stages of Creation" (<http://users.sisqtel.net/kevenbrown/sevenstages.html>) , There are two equivalent translations (of which I am aware):

-----"Káf represents the degree of Mashíyyat (Will) and Nún represents the stage of Irádih (Purpose); Mashíyyat is the father of things and Irádih the Mother. Muhammad has said: Ali and I are the Mother and Father of this people (Muslims)." [The Báb, Tafsir-i-Basmallah al-Rahman al-Rahim, cited by M. Afnán in Áhang-i Badi', vol 24(126 B.E.), no 5-6, p. 126 quoted in Divine Philosophy p. 181.]

-----"Káf represents the station of Mashíyyat (Primal Will) and Nún represents the station of Irádih (Purpose); Mashíyyat is the father of things and Irádih the Mother. Muhammad has said: Ali and I are the Mother and Father of this people (Muslims). Through Káf, God created the substance (Máddiyih) of all things and through Nún God created the form (Surat) of all things." [The Báb, in M. Afnán, "Tafsir-i-Basmallah al-Rahman al-Rahim", Áhang-i-Badi', p. 126 quoted in Divine Philosophy p. 182]

"...Nún, in the degree of exposition, is the same as the Káf. It is the whole of the world of creation. The contingent world, in its essence, in the realm of literal being, is the word Kun (Be)." The Báb quoted in Divine Philosophy p. 182.

The Báb has written that the Káf is the same as the Nun, yet they are two different things, and Bahá'u'lláh has written that the active force and its recipient are also the same yet different. It is therefore my belief that Baha'u'llah and the Báb are describing the same reality, the two complementary principles by which all created things come into existence.

Bahá'u'lláh also referenced Káf, Nún and Kun in the context of first origins and the stages of creation:

[1]

Know then that should thou make this divine "A"

(*al-alif al-ilahi*)

to revolve about its self (nafsīhi) there would be manifest two upright "A"s

(*al-alfayn al-qa'imayn*).

[2]

And then after that if thou should raise them both up unto [the value of] the tens

(*al-`asharat*)

then there would be manifest the number of twice ten

(= twenty; *`adad al-`asharayn*; $1+1 = 2 \times 10 = 20$).

[3]

Then would surely be made manifest

the [letter] ك "K" (*al-kāf*; *abjad* = 20)

of the [creative imperative] command

[= كُن *kun* = "Be!"]

by means of which the "Temples of the Divine Unity"

(*hayākil al-tawhīd*), the Manifestations of Singleness (*mazāhir al-tafrīd*)

and the loci of abstracted reality (*mawāqī` al-tajrid*)

were called into being.

[4]

And this [creative "K" as the imperative كُن]

actualized the [qur'ānic] "and it is"

(*fa-yakun*)

[= كُنْ فَيَكُونُ *kun fa-yakūn*,

"Be and it is!", Q. 2:115; 3:42; 6:72 etc]

before it was associated with

the supportive letter ن "N"

(*bi-rukn al-nūn*)

[as thou dost know]

if thou art of such as are informed.

[5]

Following this conjoining

[of ك "K" and ن "N"

as the creative imperative كُن]

the modalities (*al-ishārat*) were created

in the worlds of limitation (*`awālim al-tahdīd*) as well as the concrete [worldly] testimonies

(*dalalat al-mulkiyya*)

in the worlds of constructed reality (*`awālim al-tarkīb*).

[Tafsīr al-ḥurūfāt al-muqaṭṭa`āt (Commentary on the Isolated Letters) or Lawḥ-i āyah-yi nūr (Tablet about the Light Verse)

<http://www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/BAHA%27-ALLAH/L-hurufat.htm>

Although mention of "modalities" hints at the presence of contingency, it was expressly stated in a number of the quotations I previously cited such as: "He created all things through its causality, and the creation of anything upon which the letter of the Will hath fallen is only

possible through seven stages of contingency. The Báb, *ʔaʔffiy-i-Uʔúl va Furúʔ, Amr va Khalq*, vol. 1, pp. 99-100) (provisional translation by Kevin Brown) Kevin Brown) "Selections from the Bahá'í Writings and from Shaykh Ahmad on the Seven Stages of Creation"

Can these references to "contingency" be reconciled with the world of our observation? I believe the following quotations can help point us toward a speculative solution:

"...each created material being is possessed of a form; it cannot possess two forms at the same time. ... In the spiritual reality of man, however, all geometrical figures can be simultaneously conceived, while in physical realities one image must be forsaken in order that another may be possible. This is the law of change and transformation, and change and transformation are precursors of mortality." (Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 242)

"...no phenomenal organism can be possessed of two forms at the same time. ... But the reality of man, the human spirit, is simultaneously possessed of all forms and figures without being bereft of any of them. It does not require transformation from one concept to another." (Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 259)

"...while it is impossible for an object to possess diverse (*physical*) forms at one and the same time, the spirit of man possesses all forms and has manifold shapes simultaneously. It has no need to change from one form to another. As it is beyond change and forms, it is non-material and eternal." (The Diary of Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqání Chronicling `Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey to America, translated by Mohi Sobhani, page 197)

Quantum mechanics provides a promising resolution permitting an infinitude of contingencies to exist as alternate and potentially mutually exclusive forms in [quantum superposition](#) to each other. These waveforms of these potentials may then be understood to [collapse](#) into the actualities of fixed time (*ajal*) which are eternally written into the book (*kitáb*).

At this point I would like to incorporate by reference a compilation I am preparing on Soul, Spirit And Mind (See: [Compilation of Bahá'í Writings on the Soul, Spirit and Mind](#) also <http://www.mediafire.com/?juwryhynjn>)

...and share Shoghi Effendi's reminder that:

"When studying at present, in English, the available Bahá'í writings on the subject of body, soul and spirit, one is handicapped by a certain lack of clarity because not all were translated by the same person, and also there are, as you know, still many Bahá'í writings untranslated. But there is no doubt that spirit and soul seem to have been interchanged in meaning sometimes; soul and mind have, likewise, been interchanged in meaning, no doubt due to difficulties arising from different translations. What the Bahá'ís do believe though is that we have three aspects of our humanness, so to speak, a body, a mind and an immortal identity -- soul or spirit. We believe the mind forms a link between the soul and the body, and the two interact on each other." (Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, June 7th, 1946 from *Arohanui: Letters to New Zealand*, p. 89)

Here, Shoghi Effendi identifies three aspects of our humanness and equates "soul or spirit" as one of these three. Based on the foregoing it would seem reasonable to say that at the station of an individual life, soul and spirit are the Kun (the joining of Káf and Nún) for that life. In this sense Káf and Nún can be seen to be the same.

To illustrate Káf, Nún and Kun using the language of modern science, it may be useful to consider the analogy of a transmission hologram; which can differentiate amplitudes, wavelengths, and phase from the undifferentiated light of a laser. Applying this analogy to our subject, the active force ("Will" or "Mashíyyát") could be seen as analogous to the original undifferentiated light and that which is its recipient ("Purpose" or "Irádih") might be viewed as an infinite succession of holographic layers. Each hologram adds waveforms of differentiation to the light which passes through it and carries with it the heat, or that degree of differentiation that was previously introduced. This resulting differentiated light is then the active force (Káf) at each lower (level, stage, kingdom, or realm) where interaction with the appropriate recipient set of holographic forms (Nún) occurs. This successive and progressive interaction might then be understood to define the set of all possible particulars which may potentially arise from the originating, undifferentiated light, and cumulative represent the "Knowledge" of God".

Eric D. Perl, in his book, "THEOPHANY -- The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite" noted that "... Dionysius expressly indicates that the hierarchical activity of the being is the divine activity manifest in it. This reflects Proclus' explanation that the higher, more universal cause cooperates [sunergef] in producing whatever the lower cause produces, because the lower is itself nothing but a specification of the higher." (page 79)

God Prophets and Manifestations may then be understood to "... exist at all of these various levels [Realms of God] except the first [Háhút (*which is the realm of God's Essence*)]. Seen in their aspect of láhút, they are the Word of God, the ones "through whom the letters B and E (Be!, that is, káf and nún, kun) have been joined." Indeed, one of the most interesting and original of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings is his assertion that, since the Essence of God is hidden, unmanifested, and unknowable, in fact, all statements made about actions of God in former scriptures concern this level, and in fact, relate to the Manifestation of God--not to God's Essence.[18]" [Moojan Momen, Relativism: A Basis For Bahá'í Metaphysics](http://bahai-library.com/articles/relativism.html) (<http://bahai-library.com/articles/relativism.html>)

5. There are seven general stages [of Creation]. The first is the stage of the inorganic being. From the mineral kingdom, it ascendeth to the stage of the plant...., and from the plant kingdom, it ascendeth to the stage of the animal....When it reacheth the stage of soul, spirit, and mind, then in accordance with that stage, it hath a death which will certainly destroy all privative aspects. Finally, the command will reach the stage of the inmost heart, which is the gulf of immortality and pure life, in the presence of the Lord of creation. There, for evermore, the servant will gaze towards God. (The Báb, *Asráru'l-Áthár*, vol. 4, p. 121) (provisional translation by Keven Brown) Kevin Brown, "Selections from the Bahá'í Writings and from Shaykh Ahmad on the Seven Stages of Creation"

God's Manifestations may be understood to be perfect exemplars of "[t]he spirit of man [which] can manifest itself in all forms at the same time." (Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 307)

Let us return to our analogy of a transmission hologram in the context of God's Manifestations. It is my belief that each of God's Manifestations have revealed their message in a way that that is analogous to the introduction of a new holographic layers rendering previously undifferentiated and inapprehensible light subject to human discernment and appreciation. In this context, "revelation" is the process by which the vibratory influence of God's eternal and unchanging light is made manifest in the word, with each Divine Manifestation revealing only those

frequencies and intensities that humanity's spiritual evolution requires at the time and in the place of the Manifestation's revelation.

Elsewhere I have suggested that what we refer to as "Spirit" "is the Divine Will (Mashíyyát) in that unique degree of exposition 'Káf' that was ordained as the potential of each of our lives. I further believe that 'Soul' is the Divine Purpose (Irádih) in that unique degree of exposition 'Nún' that was also ordained as the limit of our potential." It is my belief that the probability density of our contingent futures are defined at our conception by what we call "souls" and that the potentialities of our souls are actualized through the intermediary we call "spirit" by the agency we call "mind" through the choices we make. In this context, soul and spirit may be understood to constitute the essential and eternal human reality that is merely connected with what we call "body". In other papers I have speculated that teleological principles also operate within creation as well as within the matrix of our souls' potentials. It is my belief that divine guidance, through meditation and intuition, is continually available in our lives. It is also my belief that the probability density of future potentialities or contingencies are influenced by our thoughts and

prayers. See [Meditations on Consciousness | Jon Trevathan - Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu/20083868/Meditations_on_Consciousness)

(https://www.academia.edu/20083868/Meditations_on_Consciousness)

and more generally: [Quantum Mechanics and Neuroscience](#); [A speculative means to bridge the gap between science and religion](#), [Can Quantum Mechanics Help Resolve the Origin of Life Mystery?](#); [Khidr as an Evolutionary Archetype](#); [Introduction to Time Symmetric Quantum Mechanics \(TSQM\)](#);