

Huququ'llah (The Right of God)

Talk by the Hand of the Cause Dr. 'Ali-Muhammad Varqa at the Sixth International Convention, Haifa, May 1, 1988



Dearly loved friends,

At the inception of the Six Year Plan of the Universal House of Justice, which coincided with dramatic changes in many aspects of society, a new arena for rapid development of the Faith of God has been attained and the purpose and aim of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation have been unveiled before the very eyes of Government Authorities, Heads of States and Scholars who were not even aware of its existence.

At this rightful time the Universal House of Justice has emphasized the importance of acquiring knowledge of the laws and ordinances revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, and adopted the translation of the most Holy Book, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, into English as one of the sublime goals of this new plan.

Among the commandments and decrees revealed in this sacred Book is the law of Huququ'lláh, previously applicable only to the friends in the East. The Western friends became aware of this law with the dissemination of the compilation of the Holy text and the Sacred writings prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice.

Huququ'lláh is an Arabic word composed of two words, "Huquq" meaning "Rights" and "Allah" meaning "God". Therefore, Huququ'lláh means "The Rights of God", a part of the individual's possessions and income offered at the Threshold of the Lord.

In a Tablet addressed to Jinab-i-Zayn referring to Huququ'lláh, Bahá'u'lláh states that the progress and the promulgation of the Faith of God, depend on material means, therefore, the expansion and the advancement of God's Revelation and the establishment of a new order and a new world civilization cannot be achieved without material means.

The embryo of this sacred law was established, by the Beloved Báb in the Bayan where, for the first time, the word Huququ'lláh was mentioned by Him. Bahá'u'lláh brought some modifications in its contents and

accepted it as one of the executive ordinances of His Revelation.

Although Huququ'lláh is one of the most significant laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, we should not take the word "Law" in its rigid and literal meaning, defined in the encyclopedia as "the obligatory rule promoted by a sovereign authority". It is not a law which is enforced with pressure, but rather a spiritual obligation based on the love of the believer who is eager to obey the will of his Beloved. In this ordinance there is no room for pressure or intimidation. Obedience is a reflection of the highest degree of love and ardent desire.

Huququ'lláh, by its special and unique characteristic, combines might and humility, power and humbleness. It is one of the fundamental ordinances of the Bahá'í Faith, like prayer and fasting. Its importance has been manifested by these words of Bahá'u'lláh:

"Say: O people, the first duty is to recognize the one true God -- magnified be His glory -- the second is to show forth constancy in His Cause and, after these, one's duty is to purify one's riches and earthly possessions according to that which is prescribed by God...." (The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, Huququ'llah)

By studying the writings revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding , Huququ'lláh four essential points emerge:

First, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh states:

"Should a person acquire one hundred mithqals of gold, nineteen mithqals thereof belong unto God, the Creator of earth and heaven. Take heed, O people, lest ye deprive yourselves of this great bounty...."

'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes that Huququ'lláh is payable on whatever is left over after deducting the yearly expenses.

The payment of Huququ'lláh is based on the calculation of the value of one's income in respect of the gold unit. Whenever the annual income of the individual, after the deduction of his complete year's expenses, reaches nineteen mithqals of gold value, (equivalent to 2.22456 ounces or 69.19112 grams), 19% of this amount is the Right of God and should be submitted to the Focal Point of the Faith. The calculation of sustaining means of livelihood which are exempted from Huququ'lláh depends on the spiritual maturity of every believer and his innermost conscience. No criterion can be established for this purpose, for it varies according to the living conditions and social status of each believer, and the degree of his spiritual attachment and material detachment.

The second point is that the payment of the Right of God is like a magnet, which attracts divine blessings and, confirmation. It is the mainspring of God's mercy and compassion. Bahá'u'lláh, in His writings, showers His limitless benediction upon those who observe this law.

Again, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Pen of Glory decrees:

"...and whoso fulfilleth the things he hath been commanded, divine blessings will descend upon him from the heaven of the bounty of his Lord, the Bestower, the Bountiful, the Most Generous, the Ancient of Days...."

In another Tablet we read:

"They that have kept their promises, fulfilled their obligations, redeemed their pledges and vows,

rendered the Trust of God and His Right unto Him -- these are numbered among the inmates of the all-highest Paradise...." (Baha'u'llah, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, Huququ'llah)

In a Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we find:

"Those who have observed this weighty ordinance have received heavenly blessings and in both worlds their faces have shone radiantly and their nostrils perfumed by the sweet savours of God's tender mercy...." (The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, Huququ'llah)

The third factor is that just as the payment of Huququ'lláh would attract divine bounty and blessings, its negligence or failure causes deprivation and is interpreted as tantamount to treachery to a Fund rightfully belonging to God.

This Fund is to be spent on whatever is of benefit for the promulgation of the Faith under the complete and absolute decision of the authority "to which all must turn." ('Abdu'l-Baha, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, Huququ'llah) Only this authority and none other, not even the donor, has the right to interfere in its management.

In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Pen of Glory warns those who neglect the payment of Huququ'lláh:

"O people! Act not treacherously in the matter of Huququ'lláh and dispose not of it, except by His leave...."

And He continues:

"Whoso dealeth dishonestly with God will in justice be exposed, and whoso fulfilleth the things he hath been commanded, divine blessings will descend upon him from the heaven of the bounty of his Lord, the Bestower, the Bountiful, the Most Generous, the Ancient of Days...." (ibid)

Therefore, withholding the payment of Huququ'lláh or spending it on other concerns, no matter how charitable their nature, would be interpreted as misappropriation of the fund belonging to God, and an act of dishonesty. Any donation for charity and beneficent purposes such as contributions to the various funds should be made after the contributor is free of his debt to God.

And finally, God Almighty has decreed that the payment of the Right of God is conducive to prosperity, and assists the progress of the human soul in the spiritual realms of the Everlasting world.

Bahá'u'lláh says:

"...the treasures laid up by kings and queens are not worthy of mention, nor will they be acceptable in the presence of God. However, a grain of mustard offered by His loved ones will be extolled in the exalted court of His holiness and invested with the ornament of His acceptance...." (Baha'u'llah, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, Huququ'llah)

The high station of Huququ'lláh and its exceptional rank among the commandments of Bahá'u'lláh is endowed with great veneration and respect.

'Abdu'l-Baha, referring to the words of Bahá'u'lláh says:

"...the utmost honesty hath to be observed in matters related to the Huquq. The Institution of Huquq is sacred." (Baha'u'llah, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, Huququ'llah)

In order to respect its sanctity, Bahá'u'lláh strongly forbids soliciting Huququ'lláh. No individual or institution is authorized to demand it. Whenever it is necessary to bring the importance of this obligation to the attention of the believers, it should be mentioned as a general reminder. Spiritual maturity must stir the conscience of the believers and, nothing else. In a Tablet addressed to Haji Amin the second Trustee of Huququ'lláh, Bahá'u'lláh says:

"No one should demand the Huququ'lláh. Its payment should depend on the volition of the individuals themselves... (Baha'u'llah, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, Huququ'llah)

And again:

"...Ye may relinquish the whole world but must not allow the detraction of even one jot or tittle from the dignity of the Cause of God. Jinab-i-Amin -- upon him be My glory -- must also refrain from mentioning this matter, for it is entirely dependent upon the willingness of the individuals themselves. They are well acquainted with the commandment of God and are familiar with that which was revealed in the Book. Led him who wisheth observe it, and led him who wisheth ignore it...." (Baha'u'llah, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, Huququ'llah)

The concept of Huququ'lláh is an evolutionary process subject to great changes, dependent on our spiritual growth, and our deepening of the Holy writings.

Most of the friends believe Huququ'lláh is a way for fund raising, and its aim is to strengthen the material potential of the Faith. Indeed the payment of Huququ'lláh contributes to a large extent to the needs of the Cause. It is an important instrument for building and strengthening the structure of the edifice of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and when it is fully established there will be an ever-flowing source of revenue at the disposal of the Focal Point of the Cause of God to promote the Faith and to meet the growing needs of establishing a new world order. But, in fact, the purpose and aim of Huququ'lláh is far beyond that and much greater and more spiritual than we imagine.

In 1978/79, following the Iranian upheaval, when the most important source of revenue of the Faith stopped functioning, I asked the Universal House of Justice if it was time for the implementation of Huququ'lláh in some of the Western countries. The Universal House of Justice replied that Huququ'lláh is a very important law, and its implementation needs time and consultation in the future. At the time, I could not comprehend the wisdom of what had been stated. It was after studying the Holy writings with more depth, that I have realized that Huququ'lláh which could be interpreted as the material aspect of the Covenant of God, in reality is a spiritual and learning process, a way of strengthening the link of love and dedication between man and God, and its implementation needs studying and deepening.

Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas says:

"Indeed there lie concealed in this command, mysteries and benefits which are beyond the comprehension of anyone save God, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed...."

Therefore, we cannot expect to comprehend the essence and the wisdom hidden in this sacred law. They are kept in the treasury of God's knowledge and are related to the evolution and progress of the human soul in the world of God. What we can conceive by our human understanding is that the payment of Huququ'lláh is the sign of our love and obedience, a proof of our firmness and steadfastness and a symbol of our trustworthiness in the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. It creates and develops our spiritual quality which leads us towards perfection; it harmonizes and balances our material endeavour, protects us from excessive desire which is born in our human nature, and when unleashed turns into a preventive element

for our spiritual growth. ...

It is important to note that although there is some similarity between Huququ'lláh and the other donations, and that all are the marvelous fruits of love, enthusiasm and devotion of the believers to the Faith, there are four major differences between them:

1. The payment of Huququ'lláh has priority over all other contributions because it belongs to God. The contribution of the believers to the funds should be made from their possessions and not from what belongs to the Lord.
2. The payment of Huququ'lláh according to the explicit text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is an obligation subject to specific laws and ordinances, whereas other donations are not considered as a law. They are rather an indication of the sacrifice, generosity, detachment and magnanimity of the contributor to meet the needs of the administration of the Cause.
3. Huququ'lláh is determined precisely on accurate calculation, whereas there are no rules related to the frequency or the amount of the contribution to the funds.
4. The disposal of the Huququ'lláh is left solely to the Focal Point of the Faith, and none other, whereas the disposal of the other contributions can depend on the purpose for which the contribution has been earmarked.

Undoubtedly, the awareness of the friends about Huququ'lláh will raise many questions, including those related to its calculation and the appraisal of that part of one's belongings which is subject to exemption. One should consider that what is revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas about Huququ'lláh is only the fundamental basis of this injunction, and the approach of the Blessed Beauty is confined to these guiding lines and general principles. He has not set any special rules or legislation. In all His writings related to this matter, God's self-sufficiency and independence of all things has been manifested, and the fragrance of His compassion, generosity and mercy is inhaled. According to the letter written in 1878 by His secretary to an early believer, for the first time the acceptance of Huququ'lláh was granted to those Persian friends who had the desire to contribute, therefore, during five years after the revelation of the law, Bahá'u'lláh did not accept Huququ'lláh and on many occasions the offering of the friends was returned to them. It could be assumed that since He, Himself, as the Central Figure of His Revelation, is the only recipient of Huququ'lláh, He did not want to go into details, but left them, in conformity to the Will of God, to the Universal House of Justice, the Body which has the power to enact laws that are not precisely given in the Book.

When the Kitáb-i-Aqdas reached Iran and as the friends became aware of its contents, a consultative body, which could be the nucleus of our actual Local Spiritual Assemblies, was formed in Tihiran. In their minutes we notice that the dissemination of the knowledge of Huququ'lláh was one of the goals set by that body 101 years ago.

The growing eagerness of the believers for the execution of God's injunction led them to ask Bahá'u'lláh for elucidation regarding Huququ'lláh and this was given to them in various Tablets. The most important guidance was revealed -- in response to Jinab-i-Zayn's request -- as an annex to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in the form of questions and answers. More guidance from the Beloved Master, the Guardian, and in recent decades from the Universal House of Justice has shed light on Huququ'lláh which we can find in the compilation issued by the World Centre.

With the increasing awareness of the Bahá'ís and the fast growing complexity of the social and economic system of society, the Bahá'í community will witness the establishment of rules and guidance on

Huququ'lláh by the Supreme Authority of the Faith. Meanwhile, according to the Universal House of Justice's letter of March 1, 1984, in the absence of explicit text and Holy writings on Huququ'lláh, the friends are free to honour the obligation of Huququ'lláh based on their own judgement and conscience.

Indeed, while the establishment of rules and directions can explain the different aspects of Huququ'lláh, the ideal functioning and efficiency of these legislations depend on the spiritual advancement of the friends and their deepening in the Holy Writings.

That is why the Universal House of Justice has, as one of its major goals of the Six Year Plan, adopted the education of Huququ'lláh as a priority, preparing the way for the implementation of the law of God in the Bahá'í world, and has asked the fervent collaboration of the major institutions of the Faith, such as the National Spiritual Assemblies and the Continental Boards of Counsellors to share this important task with the Institution of Huququ'lláh in promoting the education of God's injunction to the Bahá'í community at large. During the last two years, some of the National Spiritual Assemblies -- in particular the National Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada and a few others in other parts of the world -- offered remarkable assistance for this sublime goal and it is hoped many more will join in the future to assist with this task. As a result of the effort of such National Spiritual Assemblies, a number of Western friends are contributing to Huququ'lláh even before its formal implementation. This leads us to hope that education on this subject will become more widespread and that, by the end of the Six Year Plan, the Bahá'í world will have attained a higher level of flourishing spiritual advancement.