XXII. THE GREATEST NAME OF GOD

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English

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A. The Greatest Name

1. **The Greatest Name is the Name of Comfort, Protection, etc.**

"The Greatest Name should be found upon the lips in the first awakening moment of early dawn. It should be fed upon by constant use in daily invocation, in trouble, under opposition, and should be the last word breathed when the head rests upon the pillow at night. It is the name of comfort, protection, happiness, illumination, love and unity."

"I hope that thou mayest become informed of the concealed mystery and recondite symbol of the stone of the Most Great Name... The use of the Greatest Name and dependence upon it, cause the soul to strip itself of the husks of mortality and to step forth freed, reborn, a new creature...."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: United States Supplement to Bahá'í News, No. 80, p. 2, October 1964)

1. **Bahá'ís May Greet Each Other with "Allah-u-Abha"**

"The Bahá'ís are free to greet each other with Allah-u-Abha when they meet, if they want to, but they should avoid anything which to outsiders, in a western country, might seem like some strange oriental password. We must be very firm on principles and laws, but very normal and natural in our ways, so as to attract strangers!"

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 17, 1951)

1. **The Greatest Name is the Name of Bahá'u'lláh**

"The Greatest Name is the Name of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha' is an invocation meaning: 'O Thou Glory of Glories!' 'Allah-u-Abha' is a greeting which means: 'God the All-Glorious'. Both refer to Bahá'u'lláh. By 'Greatest Name' is meant that Bahá'u'lláh has appeared in God's Greatest Name, in other words, that He is the supreme Manifestation of God."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, December 26, 1941)

1. **The Greatest Name is an Invocation and a Symbol of Our Faith**

"Concerning your question regarding the 'Greatest Name': The Greatest Name is an invocation which means 'O Thou Glory of Glories!' The word 'Baha', or 'Glory', is a reference to Bahá'u'lláh. The Greatest Name is a distinctive mark of the Cause and a symbol of our Faith. The term of 'Allah-u-Abha,' on the other hand, is a form of Bahá'í greeting, and means 'God the All-Glorious.'"

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 8, 1941)

1. **Use of Greatest Name Symbol — Not Appropriate on Articles Put to Common Use**

"The overriding consideration must always be the proper dignity with which the [pg 268] Greatest Name should be used. Thus it would not be befitting to use it on drinking vessels or ash trays, plates for eating, and the like. There would, however, be no objection to its use on plaques or ornaments, jewellery or similar items which are not normally put to common use. The House of Justice instructs us to say that great care should be given to the accurate representation of the Persian calligraphy, since any deviation from an accepted representation can be distressing to Iranian believers."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Belgium, March 12, 1980)

1. **Guidelines on the Use of the Symbols of the Greatest Name on Stationery and in Paintings**

"...We are requested by the Universal House of Justice to share with you the following guidelines on the use of the symbols of the Greatest Name."

"The Guardian, in a letter written on his behalf to an individual on 5 August 1949, stated:

'It is better not to encourage the use of this symbol on stationery and in paintings.'"

"Likewise, the Universal House of Justice, in its letter to a National Assembly stated:

'We wish to call to your attention the impressions of the Greatest Name on the back of the envelope in which your letter was enclosed. The use of the Greatest Name is not befitting and we ask you to discontinue it.'" (16 May 1971)

"In another communication regarding this subject, the following was written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Assembly:

'...we are instructed to say that it would not be appropriate to use the symbol of the Greatest Name on the official stationery of a Local Spiritual Assembly.'" (6 November 1984)

"While the House of Justice is reluctant to issue a list of the specific uses of the Greatest Name which should be avoided, the principal thing is for the friends to realize the great sacredness of this symbol, and to use it in ways which are dignified and appropriate...."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands, June 3, 1987)

1. **Stickers, Use of Not Encouraged**

"Regarding the sticker with 'World Fellowship' and the ring-stone symbol on it: He does not encourage the use of this type of thing."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 12, 1946: From a compilation of Extracts Concerning Guidance on the Use of the Greatest Name, attached to the above letter to the National Assembly of Hawaiian Islands)

1. **Tombstones Please Refer to No. 672.**

1. **Emblems**

"We have your letter of June 22, 1967 enclosing sketches of emblems which are intended to be used by Bahá'ís who wish to place them inside their automobiles."

"The use of such emblems is entirely within the discretion of your National [pg 269] Assembly, but you should not use the Greatest Name on the emblem."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 16, 1967: Ibid.)

1. **Believer Can Manufacture and Sell Items Using the Greatest Name**

"Although there exists an instruction that the symbol of the Greatest Name should not be used on gravestones, no instruction has been found prohibiting the use of the symbol of the Greatest Name on any other particular item, such as jewellery, books or pamphlets. However, the Greatest Name should not be used in an undignified manner."

"Nothing has been found which would prohibit a believer from manufacturing and selling items using the Greatest Name provided that the manner in which the Greatest Name is used is dignified."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, March 25, 1975: Ibid.)

1. **No Prohibition Against Use of Greatest Name, Names of the Manifestations or Names of Central Figures in Songs**

"We have found nothing in the texts forbidding the use of the Greatest Name, the Names of the Manifestations of God or the names of the Central Figures of our Faith in the lyrics of music. However, we feel that when they are used they should be used with reverence and respect, both in the manner in which they are incorporated in the lyrics and in the manner of presentation."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 14, 1968)

1. **Reproducing Greatest Names on Jewellery Commercially**

"When individual Bahá'ís reproduce on a limited scale the Greatest Name on items such as jewellery, and find ways of selling these items to others, they should normally be left free to engage in such an activity, without interference from Bahá'í institutions, except in cases when in the opinion of these institutions the interests of the Faith are being adversely affected."

"However, when the friends intend to produce and sell such items on a large scale they should first seek the permission of the National Assembly, which should generally be well disposed to permit the production and sale of these objects if in their judgement the interests of the Faith are not being prejudiced and the necessary standards of dignity and propriety are being upheld."

"In all cases where the friends wish to use the venue of a Bahá'í function or event, conducted under the auspices of a Bahá'í institution, in order to display and sell their products, they may engage in this activity only if the institution concerned gives them the permission to do so."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 15, 1978)

1. **Picture of the Greatest Name May Be Destroyed, if Necessary**

"If it becomes necessary to destroy a picture of the Greatest Name, there is no objection to whatever method is used. It is quite proper to wear the ring stone as a pin."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 5, 1957) [pg 270]

1. **Reciting the Greatest Name 95 Times Daily**[1]

"The use of the Greatest Name 95 times a day is not absolutely binding. This and other similar matters will be clearly and fully explained when the 'Aqdas' is published. At present, however, the friends should be careful not to lay an undue emphasis upon them."

"When using the Greatest Name the words 'Allah-u-Abha' should be used and not 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha'."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 10, 1936)

1. **The Greatest Name or Picture of Abdu'l-Bahá Should Be Placed in a Dignified Position**

"It is quite important that the Greatest Name or the picture of Abdu'l-Bahá be placed in a dignified position. They should not be placed on the floor, nor, on the other hand, should they be

1. (See also: Nos. 1538-1539)

held above the heads of the people in the photograph. It would seem the proper position would be for them to be held about chest height."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 10, 1952)

B. Ringstone Emblem and Jewellery[2]

1. **Ringstone Emblem is Form of the Greatest Name — Use of on Jewelry**

"In reply to your letter of November 2nd about the use of the Greatest Name on brooches and other decorations, we quote below the text of a letter which we wrote on this subject in 1964 to another National Spiritual Assembly:

'The ring-stone emblem is one form of the Greatest Name. While the beloved Guardian has called attention to the sacredness of the Greatest Name, and has asked that it should always be placed in a dignified position, we do not find any instruction absolutely prohibiting the use of symbols of the Greatest Name on any particular item such as jewelry, books or pamphlets.

'We feel that the friends should exercise the greatest discrimination and good taste in its use'."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, November 15, 1967)

1. **Bahá'ís Not Required to Wear Ringstone**

"It was kind of you to think of making pins for the Bahá'ís; but he feels that this is too much like clubs and other organizations. Indeed the Bahá'ís do not even have to wear a Bahá'í ring-stone unless they care to do so. He thinks it is better not to add any other means of identification."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 22, 1956)

1. **Ringstone Inscription Explained**

"The inscription upon the Bahá'í ringstone is the symbol of the Greatest Name, Baha, who is the Manifestation of the essence of God. It is also symbolic of the three planes representing the World of God, the World of Revelation and the World of Creation."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 28, 1938) [pg 271]

1. **The Significance of the Stars**

2. (See also: Nos. 901 and 903)

"Upon the horizon of Eternal Glory two luminous stars have arisen in brilliance: one to the right and one to the left... this is the mystery of the appearance of the Beauty of Abha and of the Supreme Highness (the Bab). And though these two diagrams at the right and the left have the form of stars, they also represent the body of man, with the head, the two arms and the two legs, since this diagram has five points."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'í Scriptures, p. 479, 1923 ed.)

1. **Greatest Name — An Invocation**

"He also wishes me to inform you that the symbol of the Greatest Name represents an invocation which can be translated either as 'O Glory of Glories' or 'O Glory of the All-Glorious'. The word glory used in this connection is a translation of the Arabic term 'Baha', the name of Bahá'u'lláh."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 28, 1935: Bahá'í News, No. 93, p. 1, July 1935) [pg 272]