

XXXIII. THE NUMBER NINE

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

Original English



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1. The Number Nine is Reverenced for Two Reasons by Bahá'ís

"Concerning the number nine: The Bahá'ís reverence this for two reasons, first because it is considered by those who are interested in numbers as a sign of perfection. The second consideration which is the more important one is that it is the numerical value for the word 'Baha'. (B=2, h=5, a=1, and there is an accent at the end of the word which is also = 1; the 'a' after the 'B' is not written in Persian so it does not count.) In the Semitic languages — both Arabic and Hebrew — every letter of the alphabet had a numerical value, so instead of using figures to denote numbers they used letters and compounds of letters. Thus every word had both a literal meaning and also a numerical value. This practice is no more in use but during the time of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bab it was quite in vogue among the educated classes, and we find it very much used in the Bayan. As the word Baha also stood for the number nine it could be used interchangeably with it."

"Besides these two significances the number nine has no other meaning. It is however enough to make the Bahá'ís use it when an arbitrary number is to be chosen."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 19, 1932)

1. The Number Nine is Considered by Bahá'ís as Sacred

"The number nine which in itself is the number of perfection is considered by the Bahá'ís as sacred because it is symbolic of the perfection of the Bahá'í Revelation which constitutes the ninth in the line of existing religions, the latest and fullest Revelation which mankind has ever known. The eighth is the religion of the Bab, and the remaining seven are: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the religion of the Sabeans. These religions are not the only true religions that have appeared in the world, but are the only ones still existing. There have always been divine Prophets and Messengers, to many of whom the Qur'an refers. But the only ones existing are those mentioned above."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 28, 1936: Bahá'í News, No. 105, February 1937, p. 2)

1. The Number Nine Symbolizes the Nine Great World Religions and Perfection and is the Numerical Value of Baha



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"First, regarding the significance of the number nine: Its importance as a symbol used so often in various connections by the believers lies in three facts: first, it symbolizes the nine great world religions of which we have any definite historical knowledge, including the Babi and Bahá'í Revelations; second, it represents the number of perfection, being the highest single number; third, it is the numerical value of the word 'Baha'."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1939) [pg 416]

1. Nine as the Highest Digit Symbolizes Comprehensiveness, Culmination

"Regarding your various questions: We must avoid giving the impression of being all tied up with peculiar religious theories; on the other hand, the 9 sides of the Temple, and the 9-pointed star require an explanation, and he feels the best one is this:

Nine is the highest digit, hence symbolizes comprehensiveness, culmination; also, the reason it is used in the Temple's form is because 9 has the exact numerical value of 'Baha' (in the numerology connected with the Arabic alphabet) and Baha is the name of the Revealer of our Faith, Bahá'u'lláh. The 9-pointed star is not a part of the teachings of our Faith, but only used as an emblem representing '9'. In telling people of the 9 religions of the world, that is, existing religions, we should not give this as the reason the Temple has 9 sides. This may have been an idea of the architect, and a very pleasing idea, which can be mentioned in passing, but the Temple has 9 sides because of the association of 9 with perfection, unity and 'Baha'."

"The Guardian feels that with intellectuals and students of religion the question of exactly which are the 9 existing religions is controversial, and it would be better to avoid it. He does not want the friends to be rigid in these matters, but use their judgment and tact; sometimes one statement is exactly the right thing for one type of mind and the wrong thing for another."

"Strictly speaking the 5-pointed star is the symbol of our Faith, as used by the Bab and explained by Him. But the Guardian does not feel it is wise or necessary to complicate our explanations of the Temple by adding this."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 28, 1949)

1. The Bab Utilized the Numerical Value of Words to Symbolize Spiritual Concepts

"The Bab made use of the numerical value of words to symbolize spiritual concepts. The Persian for 'The Letters of the Living' is 'Huruf-i-Hay'; there were 18 of these first disciples of the Bab and the numerical value of the word 'Hay' is 44. These 18 letters, together with the Bab Himself, constitute the first 'Vahid' of the Revelation. The word 'Vahid' has a numerical value of 19, and means 'Unity'. It symbolizes the unity of God, and thus the number 19 itself symbolizes the unity of God, and it was used by the Bab as the basis for His Calendar. One may also note the reference on 'The Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas' to 19 or 95 mithqals of gold or silver in connection with the laws of marriage and of Huququ'llah."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, November 13, 1980)

1. **Superstition Concerning the Number 13**

"Such suppositions regarding lucky or unlucky numbers are purely imaginary. The superstition concerning thirteen had its origin in the fact that His Holiness Jesus Christ was surrounded by twelve disciples and that Judas Iscariot was the thirteenth member of their gathering. This is the source of the superstition, but it is purely imaginary. Although Judas was outwardly a disciple, in reality he was not. Twelve is the original number of significance and completion. Jacob had twelve sons, from whom [pg 417] descended twelve tribes. The disciples of Jesus were twelve; the Imams of Muhammad were twelve. The zodiacal signs are twelve, the months of the year are twelve, etc."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 196-197, 1982 ed.) [pg 418]

