

Huqúqu'lláh — The Right of God

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

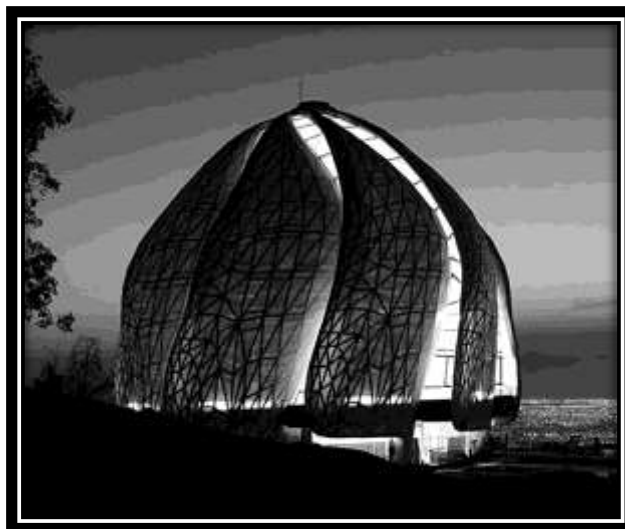
In this great Dispensation the merciful Lord has provided humanity with spiritual solutions to its economic problems. Many of these problems are caused by the inequitable distribution of extreme wealth and poverty, an injustice which has plagued the economy of humankind throughout history. One part of the solution comes from a spiritual law revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, which requires the believer to offer a fixed portion of the value of his or her wealth to the Faith. This spiritual law is called Huqúqu'lláh, in English meaning the "Right of God." It enables the believer to "*purify one's riches and earthly possessions.*"¹ It insures the collection of sufficient funds "*that the general Treasury is strengthened,*"² which makes it possible "to promote the interests of the Cause throughout the Bahá'í world"³ and eventually provide for "the relief of the poor, the disabled, the needy, and the orphans,"⁴ and for other philanthropic purposes. The offering of the Right of God is a spiritual obligation, the fulfillment of which has been left to the conscience of each Bahá'í. While the community may be reminded of the requirements of the law of Huqúq, it is an inflexible principle that no appeals or solicitations may be made to a believer. This offering is separate from giving to the various Bahá'í funds and takes precedence over them.

The Bahá'í Writings inform us of the spiritual benefits conferred upon those who offer the Right of God in a spirit of joy and radiance. Such benefits include the purification of one's possessions, blessings and added prosperity, divine protection, boundless grace, God's loving kindness, His tender mercy, His most excellent favors, and an elevated station in both this world and the next.

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The payment of the Right of God is based on the calculated value of the individual's possessions, including one's merchandise, property and income, after all necessary expenses have been paid. If a person has possessions or wealth in excess of what is necessary, equal in value to at least nineteen mithqáls of gold (19 mithqáls equal 2.22456 ounces), it is a spiritual obligation to pay nineteen percent (19%) of the total amount, once only, as the Right of God. Thereafter, whenever one's income causes an increase in the value of one's possessions or wealth by the amount of at least nineteen mithqáls of gold, one is to pay nineteen percent of this increase, and so on for each further increase.

Certain categories of possessions are exempt from the payment of the Right of God, such as one's residence, necessary household furnishings, business or professional equipment and furnishings, and others. Bahá'u'lláh has left it to the individual to decide which items are considered necessary and which are not. Specific provisions are outlined to cover cases of financial loss, the failure of investments to yield a profit and for the payment of the Right of God in the event of the person's death.



Continental Bahá'í House of Worship for South America, near Santiago, Chile

¹ COC, Vol. I, p. 499, #1129

² COC, Vol. I, p. 494, #1117

³ LOG, p. 307, #1037

⁴ COC, Vol. I, p. 513, #1173

During Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime, the offering of the Right of God was made directly to Him, and following His Ascension, to `Abdu'l-Bahá. In His Will and Testament, `Abdu'l-Bahá provided the Right of God to be offered after him "through the Guardian of the Cause of God."¹ There now being no Guardian, it is offered through the Universal House of Justice as the Head of the Faith. The Universal House of Justice expends the monies received to promote the Faith of God and its interests and for various philanthropic purposes.

Payment of the Right of God can be made directly to the Universal House of Justice at the World Centre or through the appointed Trustees. Bahá'í national news publications usually list the Trustees of the Right of God and their addresses. Deputies and representatives of the Institution of Huqúqu'lláh are available to inform those who inquire about their payment and where and how to make the offering. They carry out their task with complete discretion and confidentiality. These designated representatives can usually be identified by members of the Local Spiritual Assembly or may be specified in local or national Bahá'í newsletters or websites.

OBJECTIVE: *A look to the horizon...*

Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The objective of this study is to understand the fundamental verities or basic truths regarding the importance of the law of Huqúqu'lláh, the Right of God.

THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the water of life...*

Facilitator

Review the following study process with the participants. Then study the numbered quotations that follow, one at a time as described below.

1. **READING:** *A drink from the cup of guidance...*

Two volunteers take turns reading the quotation out loud so it is read twice.

2. **CONFIRMING MEANING:** *A spray from the fountain of light...*

PARTICIPANTS: To better understand certain words used in the quotation, take turns with the following:

A. Choose a word from the quotation and state it for the whole group to hear. (Like a fun game – pick a word!) Then...

B. Read out loud the sentence that contains the **word** you selected, **while substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition, or synonym from the boxes below the quotation.

Repeat A and B above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words.

3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Mining the gems of truth...*

Take turns stating each basic fact or truth you can find in the quotation about the Huqúqu'lláh or Right of God.

¹ WT, p. 15

QUOTATIONS: *Within the meadows of Thy nearness...*

1. *Huqúqu'lláh is indeed a great law. It is incumbent upon all to make this offering, because it is the source of grace, abundance, and of all good. It is a bounty which shall remain with every soul in every world of the worlds of God, the All-Possessing, the All-Bountiful.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 490, #1105)

abundance: means and resources in ample supply; affluence
All-Bountiful: sole One completely generous in giving gifts and favors
All-Possessing: sole One completely owning and controlling everything
bounty: generously bestowed gift or favor
grace: God's special favors that make people morally pure and strong
Huqúqu'lláh: In English, the Right of God. A monetary payment, instituted in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, made by the believers to God, the ☞

proceeds of which now go to the Universal House of Justice.
incumbent: imposed as a duty
law: rule of conduct established and enforced by authority
offering: presentation to God as an act of worship
remain: continue unchanged and stay
soul: person's immortal essence
source: origin or cause
world(s): domain(s) of existence; state(s) of being or reality

2. *Well is it with them that have fulfilled that which is prescribed [the Right of God] in the Book of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to observe that which God hath purposed, for whatsoever hath been set forth in the Book by the Pen of Glory is an effective means for the purging, the purification and sanctification of the souls of men and a source of prosperity and blessing. Happy are they that have observed His commandments.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 502, #1138)

blessing: the special benefits of happiness and welfare
Book of God: recorded Revelation of God; today, Bahá'u'lláh's Writings
commandments: authoritative commands or orders
effective: desirable results producing [kind of]
fulfilled: carried out to completion
incumbent: imposed as a duty
means: method that is useful
observe: conform their actions and comply with
observed: conformed their actions and complied with
Pen of Glory: refers to the instrumentation of the Manifestation of God; Bahá'u'lláh

prescribed: laid down as a guide, direction, or rule of action
prosperity: advancement or success in economic well-being or anything good
purging: making clear of guilt or moral defilement
purification: freeing and cleansing from fault, blame, or sin
purposed: intended or determined
sanctification: making holy and righteous by grace
set forth: written or made known
souls: immortal essence of the rational, spiritual, and emotional self
source: origin or cause

3. *In this day it is incumbent upon everyone to serve the Cause of God, while He Who is the Eternal Truth — exalted be His glory — hath made the fulfilment of every undertaking on earth dependent on material means. Hence it is enjoined upon every individual to offer that which is the Right of God.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 500, #1132)

Cause of God: purpose and plans of the Bahá'í Faith
dependent: subject to or conditioned
enjoined: imposed as an order or command
fulfilment: carrying out to completion; accomplishment
hence: as a deduction from the preceding statement

incumbent: imposed as a duty
material: non-spiritual, physical, or tangible
means: resources or available wealth
offer: present to God as an act of worship
Right of God: English translation of “Huqúqu'lláh”
serve: perform beneficial deeds or works [for]
undertaking: business, work, project, or enterprise

4. This weighty ordinance, as testified by the Pen of Glory is invested with incalculable benefit and wisdom. It purifies one's possessions, averts loss and disaster, conduces to prosperity and honour and imparts divine increase and blessing. It is a sacrifice offered for and related to God, and an act of servitude leading to the promotion of His Cause.

(The Universal House of Justice, cited in *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, p. 309, #1044)

averts: causes to be avoided
benefit: favor, gift, or gained advantage
blessing: special benefits of happiness and welfare
conduces: tends to lead
disaster: sudden calamitous or ruinous events
divine: from God
His Cause: the Bahá'í Faith
honour: being held in high regard for moral worth, nobility, and excellence of character
imparts: causes to be given
incalculable: greater than what is foreseeable or determinable [in]
increase: greater affluence and influence
invested: furnished or endowed
loss: harm from the destruction or the ruination of things of value
offered: presented as an act of worship
ordinance: ordered practice or law

Pen of Glory: refers to the instrumentation of the Manifestation of God; Bahá'u'lláh
possessions: properties, belongings, and wealth one owns
promotion: furtherance or advancement
prosperity: advancement or success in economic well-being or anything good
purifies: frees and cleanses one from fault, blame, or sin [of]
sacrifice: act of giving up something of value for something of greater value
servitude: devotion in which one voluntarily gives up the freedom to determine one's course of action or way of life to serve another
testified: witnessed by solemn declaration
weighty: serious and greatly important
wisdom: perception, discernment, and judgment in the application of knowledge to one's life and conduct

5. *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.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 499, #1129)

according: agreeable with and conforming
Cause: advocated and upheld System of belief, today, the Bahá'í Faith
constancy: a love that is steadfast in attachment and adherence
duty: required or morally obligated action
earthly: non-spiritual, physical, or tangible
possessions: properties, belongings, and wealth ↗

one owns
prescribed: laid down as a guide, direction, or rule of action
purify: free and cleanse from fault, blame, or sin
recognize: formally accept and acknowledge
riches: things that make one rich
show forth: make evident or certain by displaying

6. Great is the recompense that God has ordained for the true and devoted souls, the pure and detached beings who have spontaneously bequeathed a portion of their earthly possessions to the Cause of God, either during their own lifetimes or through their wills, and have had the privilege and honour of discharging their obligations to Huqúqu'lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 517, #1188)

bequeathed: given, handed down, or transmitted
Cause of God: Bahá'í Faith
discharging: performing or carrying out
obligations: moral duties or responsibilities
ordained: established by command or order
privilege: granted right

recompense: return for what was done
spontaneously: from a force within and not external
wills: written declaration of a person's wishes regarding the disposal of his or her property or wealth after death

7. *No goodly deed was or will ever be lost, for benevolent acts are treasures preserved with God for the benefit of those who act. Blessed the servant and the maidservant who have fulfilled their obligation in the path of God our Lord, the Lord of all worlds.... The Right of God must be paid whenever possible and should be offered in a spirit of joy and radiance. Those that are unable to pay will be invested with the ornament of His forgiveness.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 502, #1138)

benefit: well-being and good
benevolent: doing good, kind, or charitable
blessed: highly favored with spiritual happiness and bliss [be]
deed: action or activity performed
forgiveness: granted relief from payment
fulfilled: carried out to completion
invested: furnished or endowed by right
joy: gladness or delight
lost: ruined or destroyed spiritually
obligation: moral duty to a binding agreement or covenant

offered: presented to God as an act of worship
ornament: addition of the luster, grace, and beauty
path: actions directed towards the way
possible: conditions exist for it to occur
preserved: saved intact
radiance: lively and beaming happiness or satisfaction
Right of God: English translation of "Huqúqu'lláh"
spirit: animating attitude or state
treasures: things of great value or worth
unable: without the ability

SHARING: *A breath from the spirit of inspiration...*

Facilitator

Ask the participants to complete the statements below. When everyone has finished, have each person share, in a round, the one thing that was most outstanding or inspiring and how it made him or her feel. Please remind everyone not to remark on the comments of others.

The one thing from the quotations that was the most outstanding or inspiring to me was _____

It made me feel _____

Explain _____

SOME QUESTIONS: *A gentle breeze from the testing winds...*

Facilitator

Ask the participants to answer the following questions. They can usually find answers in the quotations just studied or in the introduction. When everyone has finished, review the questions, then share and discuss the answers.

1. Translated into English, Huqúqu'lláh means _____
2. Bahá'u'lláh states that offering the Right of God is a source of abundance and grace.
What is abundance? _____
What is grace? _____
3. The first time you calculate the Right of God, you determine the worth of all your possessions, make the allowable deductions, and then make an offering of _____ percent of the remaining wealth to the Bahá'í Huqúqu'lláh Trust.
4. Offering of the Right of God *“is a bounty which shall remain with every soul in every world of the worlds of God, the All-Possessing, the All-Bountiful.”* Bounty is _____

5. Bahá'u'lláh revealed: *“He Who is the Eternal Truth — exalted be His glory — hath made the fulfilment of every undertaking on earth dependent on material means.”* What do you think this means? _____

6. Each believer is accountable to Bahá'u'lláh for fulfilling the following duties while on this earth. List them in order of their priority: first _____ second _____ third _____
 - a. to purify one’s riches and earthly possessions
 - b. to recognize the one true God
 - c. to show forth constancy in His Cause
7. When you are ready to make an offering to the Right of God, you contact _____

8. Bahá'u'lláh has made it clear that no institution or individual may solicit or demand the Right of God from anyone; however, general appeals can be made at meetings. Furthermore, there is no institution or individual in the Faith that monitors payments. Payment of the Right of God is a spiritual obligation between the individual and _____ .
9. In order for the offering of the Right of God to be acceptable, it must be made in a spirit of _____ and _____ .
10. What do you think it means to have one’s possessions purified? _____

11. Those who are unable to pay the Right of God, are granted forgiveness from God.
 true false
12. If you do not offer The Right of God during your lifetime, you may make provisions in your _____ for this obligation to be met.

APPLICATION: *Showing forth divine light...*

Facilitator

Read through the following paragraph together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action. When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote: *“It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....”* Imagine how the Bahá'í Teachings in this study class could be translated into reality and action. Take turns sharing the possibilities. Begin your statements with: *“One could....”*

From your experience in this study class on the Right of God, describe what *you* are inspired to put into reality and action. *I will make conscious efforts to...* _____

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá...

As preordained by the Fountainhead of Creation, the temple of the world hath been fashioned after the image and likeness of the human body. In fact each mirroreth forth the image of the other, wert thou but to observe with discerning eyes. By this is meant that even as the human body in this world which is outwardly composed of different limbs and organs, is in reality a closely integrated, coherent entity, similarly the structure of the physical world is like unto a single being whose limbs and members are inseparably linked together.

Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.

Consider for instance how one group of created things constituteth the vegetable kingdom, and another the animal kingdom. Each of these two maketh use of certain elements in the air on which its own life dependeth, while each increaseth the quantity of such elements as are essential for the life of the other. In other words, the growth and development of the vegetable world is impossible without the existence of the animal kingdom, and the maintenance of animal life is inconceivable without the co-operation of the vegetable kingdom. Of like kind are the relationships that exist among all created things. Hence it was stated that co-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.

In surveying the vast range of creation thou shalt perceive that the higher a kingdom of created things is on the arc of ascent, the more conspicuous are the signs and evidences of the truth that co-operation and reciprocity at the level of a higher order are greater than those that exist at the level of a lower order. For example the evident signs of this fundamental reality are more discernible in the vegetable kingdom than in the mineral, and still more manifest in the animal world than in the vegetable.

And thus when contemplating the human world thou beholdest this wondrous phenomenon shining resplendent from all sides with the utmost perfection, inasmuch as in this station acts of co-operation, mutual assistance and reciprocity are not confined to the body and to things that pertain to the material world, but for all conditions, whether physical or spiritual, such as those related to minds, thoughts, opinions, manners, customs, attitudes, understandings, feelings or other human susceptibilities. In all these thou shouldst find these binding relationships securely established. The more this inter-relationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity. Indeed without these vital ties it would be wholly impossible for the world of humanity to attain true felicity and success.

Now consider, if among the people who are merely the manifestations of the world of being this significant matter is of such importance, how much greater must be the spirit of co-operation and mutual assistance among those who are the essences of the world of creation, who have sought the sheltering shadow of the heavenly Tree, and are favoured by the manifestations of divine grace; and how the evidences of this spirit should, through their earnest endeavour, their fellowship and concord, become manifest in every sphere of their inner and outer lives, in the realm of the spirit and divine mysteries and in all things related to this world and the next. Thus there can be no doubt that they must be willing even to offer up their lives for each other.

This is the basic principle on which the institution of Huqúqu'lláh is established, inasmuch as its proceeds are dedicated to the furtherance of these ends. Otherwise the one true God hath ever been and will always be independent of all else beside Him. Even as He hath enabled all created things to partake of His boundless grace and loving-kindness, likewise is He able to bestow riches upon His loved ones out of the treasuries of His power. However, the wisdom of this command is that the act of giving is well-pleasing in the sight of God. Consider how well-pleasing must this mighty act be in His estimation that He hath ascribed it unto His Own Self. Rejoice ye then, O people of generosity!

We earnestly hope that in this Most Great Cycle the wondrous attributes of the All-Merciful may, through the infinite bounty and blessings of the King of Glory, find expression in the lives of the servants of God in such wise that the sweet savours thereof will shed fragrance upon all regions.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 510, #1159)

ANSWERS: *Affirming treasures...*

1. the Right of God
2. abundance: means and resources in ample supply; affluence
grace: God's special favors that makes people morally pure and strong
3. nineteen percent
4. generously bestowed gift or favor
5. all answers are valuable
6. first b, second c, and third a
7. a Local Spiritual Assembly member; the Trustee, a Deputy, or a Representative of the Institution of Huqúqu'lláh
8. God
9. joy and radiance
10. all answers are valuable
11. true
12. will

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